Judge
James E. Sheridan
Lenawee County
1st Division

STATE OF MICHIGAN



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August 31, 2005

State of Michigan Supreme Court Clerk P.O. Box 30052 Lansing, MI 48909

Re: ADM File No. 2004-02 and ADM File No. 2004-60

Dear Clerk,

I am writing to express my opposition to the proposed amendment of Rule 8.103(4) and Rule 9.205(B). I am also writing to express my deep opposition for the Caseload Management standards for divorce cases.

The current caseload management standards for divorce cases set time limits of 90% within 245 days (98% within 301 days and 100% within 364 days) for cases with children and 90% within 91days (98% within 273 days and 100% within 364days) for cases without children. These standards for divorce cases should be changed. They are not in the best interests of the parties or the judiciary.

When the time standards were recommended, but not mandatory, they were merely bad policy, which could be ignored when they did not work ... which should be most of the time. However, the proposed rule, that authorizes the SCAO to refer judges who failure to meet these limits to the Judicial Tenure Commission, will turn a bad policy into a policy disaster.

Currently the divorce rate is approximately 50% for first marriages. The research of Dr. Paul Amata from the Pennsylvania State University has shown, however, that only about a third of these (i.e. about 15% of the 50%) are marriages with either violence or high levels of conflict. Most of the rest are what social scientists have come to call "good enough marriages."

When the courts are dealing with "good enough" marriages and the parties seek a divorce, we should give them every opportunity to reconcile. If they insist on divorce, fine. But, the courts should not be forcing them toward that end through artificial time limits.

Professor David Popenoe, of Rutgers University, presented materials on marriage at the 2005 Michigan Supreme Court Annual Judicial Conference, held June 16 & 17, 2005, in Lansing. His basic conclusion was that the research is overwhelming that the "gold standard" for Supreme Court

the long term best interests of children is to have the biological parents married and stay married. Any other family set up is second rate at best. (Enclosed is Professor Popenoe's material.)

Professor Popenoe is not alone. Dr. Linda Waite of the University of Chicago has found that both married men and women have better health, greater wealth and live longer than those who are divorced, never married or in second marriages. Children of divorced couples, on average, have a 4 years shorter life expectancy than children of intact families. Both men and women tend to reduce the amount of alcohol consumption and the use of illegal drugs during the year leading up to marriage and, conversely, tend to greatly increase the use of these substances following a divorce. (I am also attaching *Does Marriage Matter*, by Dr. Linda Waite, which addresses these issues. I would also recommend you read *The Case for Marriage*, by Dr. Waite and Maggie Gallagher.) Married men and women live longer and have greater wealth and better health than those who are divorced or never married.

I have attached a number of other research documents indicating the enormous social cost of divorce. The courts should be encouraging reconciliation, not forcing divorce. Such options as mediation, alternative dispute resolution and the SMILE program all take time. Another program, Retrouvaille, takes 7 weeks (42 days) from the date the program begins, which may be several weeks after the couples make contact. Retrouvaille has a success rate of 85% for turning train wreck marriages into healthy marriages. (Most of the couples who attend Retrouvaille have filed for divorce.) The time limits effectively eliminate all these options.

The 245 day limit for 90% is simply an unreasonable effort to move cases which should not necessarily be moved quickly. Even cases in which there are no longer children living at home should not be forced through in 91 days. Adult children are adversely effected by the divorce of their parents. Arbitrary time limits for these cases do not serve the public interests.

I am not suggesting that there should be no time limits at all. However, these limits do not recognize the significance of divorce for the parties, their children and the courts or the importance of giving every party every possible opportunity to reconcile, if they wish to. While we do not want "justice delayed," we should also not establish administrative goals which are adverse to the interests of justice.

It is amazing to me that general civil proceedings, which generally do not have the enormous impact on the lives of the participants and the community, have much longer time limits. Only 75% need be adjudicated within 364 days. The policy is upside down, when the rules force cases through which should be given every opportunity to reconcile and those that the public has less interest in are given nearly twice as long to be resolved.

I have been told that some communities in the state have been "able to meet these time limits" during pilot projects. If they can do it, the reasoning goes, why shouldn't everyone? This misses the point. I'm quite sure every court can meet these rules. That is not the question,

Supreme Court Page 3 August 31, 2005

however. The more important question is whether it is good public policy to require people to act quickly when the public is best served by giving them as much time as needed to reconsider their decision.

Ironically, these rules, if enforced, will actually serve to increase the case load of the courts in the long run. On the criminal side of the docket approximately 85% of our current prison population comes from broken homes. Juveniles are also 12 times more likely to be incarcerated for criminal offenses when their parents are divorced than if they are from intact homes. On the civil side, as one expert put it, the primary result of divorce is remarriage. The vast majority of people who divorce, especially those with children, enter into second marriages. Yet, the divorce rate for second marriages is even greater than for first marriages, generally about 75%. By artificially forcing divorces these rules would serve to encourage people to enter into even more unstable relationships, which would also end up back in the judicial system. This is not "judicial economy."

Divorce brings an enormous cost to local, state and federal governments. Professor David Schramm of Utah State University's Department of Family, Consumer and Human Development, has estimated that each divorce costs the state and federal government about \$30,000. That works out to be over \$1 billion per year in Michigan, alone, based on the 35,880 divorces in Michigan in 2003. We should be working to reduce divorces, not set rules that encourage them ... then force the judge to appear before the Judicial Tenure Commission for failure to enforce a poorly reasoned rule.

Dr. Judith Wallenberg, in her book *The Unexpected Legacy of Divorce*, has noted,

The American legal system is under the impression that its activities and decisions are geared toward the safeguard of children after divorce. But I have rarely met a child who felt protected by this system. (Page 181)

I fear that the time limits have become just one more example of the official claim by the judiciary that it is looking out for the interests of the parties and the children, when, in fact the children's interests are being ignored due to the importance of administrative efficiency.

I strongly urge you to (1) rethink the time limits for divorces and (2) not adopt a court rule that would force divorces without giving the parties an adequate opportunity to reconcile.

Yours truly,

James E. Sheridan Chief Judge 2A District Court

Governmental Costs of Divorce in Michigan

David Schramm for Utah State University's Department of Family, Consumer and Human Development. Schramm has worked out an estimate of those costs. He found that a single divorce costs state and federal governments about \$30,000.1

- According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services² there were 35,880 divorces in Michigan during 2003.
- If Prof. Schramm is correct, the costs associated with these divorces to the State, Federal and local governments would be approximately \$ 1,076,400,000

¹ The information from Prof. Popenoe and Schramm are taken from an article entitled: "For every 10 who get married, nearly six file for divorce," By Kim Nilsen, of the *Triangle Business Journal*, Wake County, North Carolina, Aug. 15, 2004.

² National Center for Health Statistics, National Vital Statistics Reports, Vol 52, No. 22, June 10, 2004.

Backgroundation Backgroundation Executive Summary

No. 1373

June 5, 2000

THE EFFECTS OF DIVORCE ON AMERICA

PATRICK F. FAGAN AND ROBERT RECTOR

Each year, over 1 million American children suffer the divorce of their parents; moreover, half of the children born this year to parents who are married will see their parents divorce before they turn 18. Mounting evidence in social science journals demonstrates that the devastating physical, emotional, and financial effects that divorce is having on these children will last well into adulthood and affect future generations. Among these broad and damaging effects are the following:

- Children whose parents have divorced are increasingly the victims of abuse. They exhibit more health, behavioral, and emotional problems, are involved more frequently in crime and drug abuse, and have higher rates of suicide.
- Children of divorced parents perform more poorly in reading, spelling, and math. They also are more likely to repeat a grade and to have higher drop-out rates and lower rates of college graduation.
- Families with children that were not poor before the divorce see their income drop as much as 50 percent. Almost 50 percent of the parents with children that are going through a divorce move into poverty after the divorce.

Religious worship, which has been linked to better health, longer marriages, and better family life, drops

family life, drops after the parents divorce.

The divorce of parents, even if it is amicable, tears apart the fundamental unit of American society. Today, according to the Federal Reserve Board's 1995 Survey of Consumer Finance, only 42 percent of children aged 14 to 18 live in a "first

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marriage" family—an intact two-parent married family. It should be no surprise to find that divorce is having such profound effects on society.

Restoring the importance of marriage to society and the welfare of children will require politicians and civic leaders to make this one of their most important tasks. It also will require a modest commitment of resources to pro-marriage programs. Fiscal conservatives should realize that federal and state governments spend \$150 billion per year to

subsidize and sustain single-parent families. By contrast, only \$150 million is spent to strengthen marriage. Thus, for every \$1,000 spent to deal with the effects of family disintegration, only \$1 is spent to prevent that disintegration. Refocusing funds to preserve marriage by reducing divorce and illegitimacy not only will be good for children and society, but in the long run will save money.

Among its efforts, the federal government should:

- Establish, by resolution, a national goal of reducing divorce among families with children by one-third over the next decade.
- Establish pro-marriage demonstration programs by diverting sufficient funds from existing federal social programs into programs that provide training in marriage skills.
- Mandate that surplus welfare funds be used to strengthen marriages and slow the increase in family disintegration.
- Rebuild the federal-state system for gathering statistics on marriage and divorce, which ended in 1993. Without such data, the nation cannot assess the true impact of divorce on the family, the schools, the community, and the taxpayer.
- Create a public health campaign to inform Americans of the risks associated with divorce and of the long-term benefits of marriage.
- Give a one-time tax credit to always-married couples when their youngest children reach
 18. This small reward for committing one's marriage to nurturing the next generation into adulthood would help to offset the current marriage penalty in the tax code.

State laws govern marriage. Among their efforts, the states should:

 Establish a goal to reduce the divorce rate among parents with children by one-third over the next decade and establish pro-marriage education and mentoring programs to teach couples how to develop skills to handle conflict and enhance the marital relationship.

- Require married couples with minor children to complete divorce education and a mediated co-partnering plan before filing for divorce.
- Promote community-wide marriage programs for couples planning to get married and marriage-mentoring programs for couples in troubled marriages.
- End "no-fault" divorce for parents with children under age 18, requiring them to prove that grave harm will be visited upon the children by having the marriage continue.
- Make the Covenant Marriage option available to engaged couples as a way to bind them to a marriage contract that lengthens the process for obtaining of a divorce by two years.

If the family is the building block of society, then marriage is the foundation of the family. However, this foundation is growing weaker, with fewer adults entering into marriage, more adults leaving it in divorce, and more and more adults eschewing it altogether for single parenthood or cohabitation.

American society, through its institutions, must teach core principles: that marriage is the best environment in which to raise healthy, happy children who can achieve their potential and that the family is the most important institution for social well-being. To set about the task of rebuilding a culture of family based on marriage and providing it with all the protections and supports necessary to make intact marriages commonplace, federal, state, and local officials must have the will to act.

—Patrick F. Fagan is William H. G. FitzGerald Senior Fellow in Family and Cultural Issues and Robert Rector is Senior Research Fellow in Domestic Policy Studies at The Heritage Foundation.

Backgroundation Backgroundation Backgrounder

No. 1373 June 5, 2000

THE EFFECTS OF DIVORCE ON AMERICA

PATRICK F. FAGAN AND ROBERT RECTOR

American society may have erased the stigma that once accompanied divorce, but it can no longer ignore its massive effects. As social scientists track successive generations of American children whose parents have ended their marriages, the data are leading even some of the oncestaunchest supporters of divorce to conclude that divorce is hurting American society and devastating the lives of children. Its effects are obvious in family life, educational attainment, job stability, income potential, physical and emotional health, drug use, and crime.

Each year, over 1 million American children suffer the divorce of their parents (see Chart 1). Moreover, half of all children born to married parents this year will experience the divorce of their parents before they reach their 18th birthday. This fact alone should give policymakers and those whose careers focus on children reason to pause.

But the social science research also is showing that the effects of divorce continue into adulthood and affect the next generation of children as well. If the effects are indeed demonstrable, grave, and long-lasting, then something must be done to protect children and the nation from these consequences. Reversing the effects of divorce will entail nothing less than a cultural shift in attitude, if not a cultural revolution, because society still embraces divorce in its laws and popular culture, sending out myriad messages that "It's okay."

It is not. Mounting evidence in the annals of scientific journals details the plight of the children of

divorce and clearly indicates not only that divorce has lasting effects, but that these effects spill over into every aspect of life. For example:

Children whose parents have divorced are increasingly the victims of abuse and neglect.
They exhibit more health

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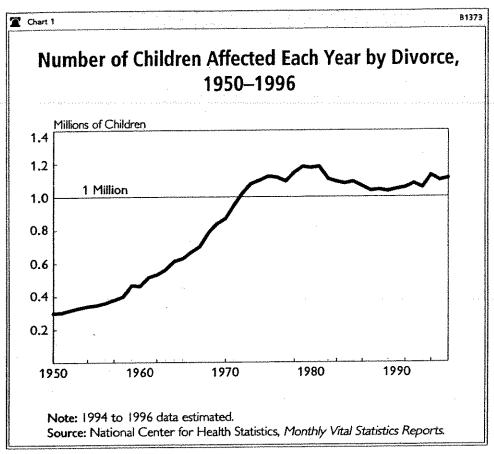
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problems, as well as behavioral and emotional problems, are involved more frequently in crime and drug abuse, and have higher rates of suicide.

 Children of divorced parents more frequently demonstrate a diminished learning capacity, performing more poorly than their peers from intact two-parent families in reading, spelling, and math. They also are more likely to repeat a



grade and to have higher drop-out rates and lower rates of college graduation.

- Divorce generally reduces the income of the child's primary household and seriously diminishes the potential of every member of the household to accumulate wealth. For families that were not poor before the divorce, the drop in income can be as much as 50 percent. Moreover, decline in income is intergenerational, since children whose parents divorce are likely to earn less as adults than children raised in intact families.
- Religious worship, which has been linked to health and happiness as well as longer marriages and better family life, is less prevalent in divorced families.

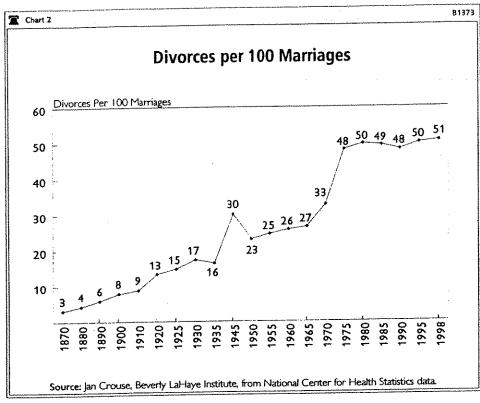
Such evidence should give all Americans reason to speak out on this problem. If nothing is done, America will continue the downward spiral into social decay.

The effects of divorce are immense. The research shows not only that it permanently weakens the relationship between a child and his or her parents, but also that it leads to destructive ways of handling conflict and a poorer self-image. Children of divorce demonstrate an earlier loss of virginity, more cohabitation, higher expectations of divorce, higher divorce rates later in life, and less desire to have children. These effects on future family life perpetuate the downward spiral of family breakdown.

The effects of divorce on children can range from mild to severe and from shortterm to long-term. Though none of the effects necessar-

ily applies to every child of divorced parents, millions of children who see their parents divorce are nonetheless affected in serious ways by that act of rejection. There is no way to predict how each individual child will be affected or to what extent, but it is possible to demonstrate and predict the numerous and serious effects that divorce is having on society. Thus, the issue for researchers is no longer to determine what divorce's ill effects are, but rather to understand the depth and persistence of these effects on children, their children, and even their grandchildren.

Policymakers at the federal and state levels have ample evidence to lend weight to efforts to change the culture of divorce. Even the legal system seriously neglects the interests of children. State officials should greatly expand effective marriage education and divorce prevention programs. They also should end the legal status of "no fault" divorce for parents who have children under the age of 18.



who can achieve their potential, and that the family is the most important institution for social well-being.

THE GROWTH OF DIVORCE

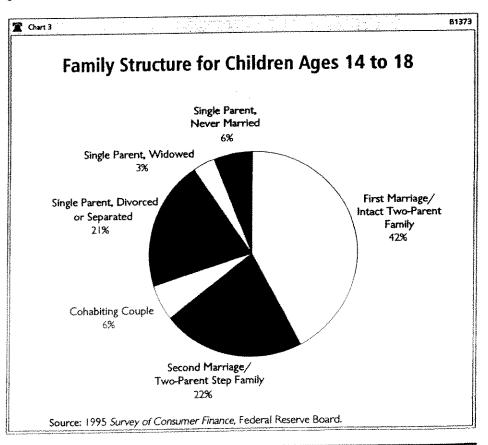
Divorce has grown significantly over the past half century, as Chart 2 shows. In 1935, there were 16 divorces for each 100 marriages. By 1998, the number had risen to 51 divorces per 100 marriages. As noted previously, over 1 million children experience parental divorce each year, and over 8 million children currently live with a divorced single parent.

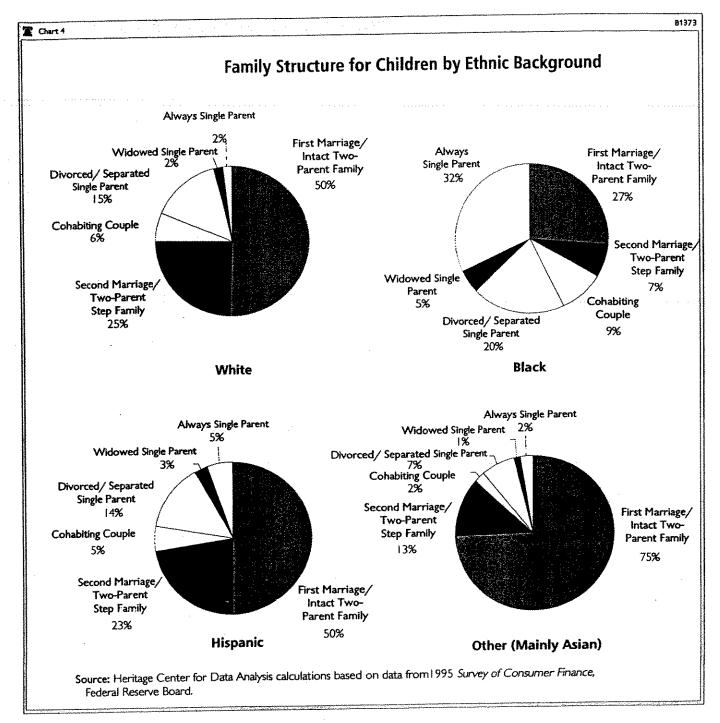
Federal officials can assist them in this effort by establishing the importance of marriage in federal policies and programs. For example, Washington

could require the states to collect and provide accurate data on marriages and divorces, noting in each case the ages of the children involved. Congress could create demonstration grants, by diverting existing funding, to enable local community groups to provide marriage education and divorce prevention programs. Finally, Congress could establish a one-time tax credit for married parents who keep their marriage intact at least until their youngest child reaches age 18.

American society, through its institutions, must teach core principles: that marriage is the best environment in which to raise healthy, happy children

The combined effect of divorce and out-of-wedlock childbearing means that more than half of America's children will spend all or part of their



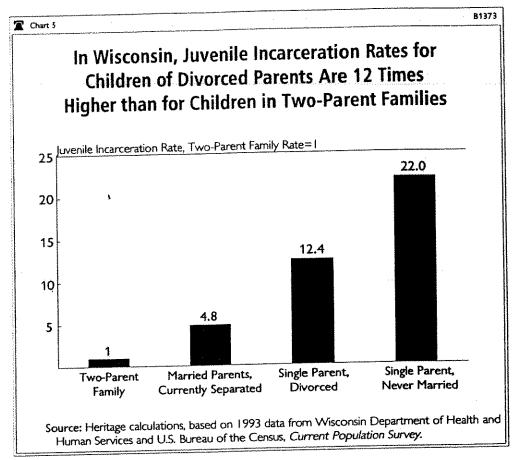


childhood living in a single-parent, divorced, or remarried family. The Federal Reserve Board's 1995 Survey of Consumer Finance shows that only 42 percent of children aged 14 to 18 live in a "first marriage" family, generally an intact two-parent married family with both biological parents. ¹

Due to the impreciseness of Survey of Consumer Finance definitions, these figures must be treated as rough estimates only.
The Survey of Consumer Finance divides married-couple households into first- and second-marriage households. Although
we have counted all children in first-marriage households as living with both biological parents, a small number of these
children may have been born out of wedlock before the mother's marriage to another man; such children would not be
residing with both biological parents.

Some 21 percent of teenage children live with a single parent who is divorced or separated, while 22 percent live in a two-parent household with one stepparent. The remaining teenagers live with a nevermarried single parent (6 percent), a widowed single parent (3 percent), or cohabiting adults (6 percent). (See Chart 3.)

Chart 4 shows that family structure varies considerably by ethnic group. Three-fourths of Asian—American teenagers live in an intact-married-couple family with both biological parents. Among whites and Hispanics, the number is 50 percent; among blacks, it is 25 percent.



HOW DIVORCE AFFECTS SOCIETY

The divorce of parents, even if it is an amicable decision, tears apart a family—the fundamental unit of American society. It should be no surprise to find, then, that the prevalence of divorce is having profound effects on society. What may surprise many policymakers and other Americans is how strong the relationship is between family background and such problems as crime, abuse and neglect, and addictions.

Divorce and Crime

To understand the significant relationship between the rate of crime in a community and family background, one need only look at the evidence. For example, Robert Sampson, professor of sociology at the University of Chicago, found that the divorce rate predicted the rate of robbery in any given area, regardless of economic and racial composition. Sampson studied 171 U.S. cities with populations of more than 100,000. In these communities, he found that the lower the rates of divorce, the higher the formal and informal social controls (such as the supervision of children) and the lower the crime rate. ⁴

These figures treat all children in "second marriage" families as residing in stepparent families; however, some of these children will have been born during the second marriage and actually be residing with both biological parents.

^{3.} Generally, these cohabiting families will consist of the biological mother cohabiting with a boyfriend who is not related to the child.

Robert J. Sampson, "Crime in Cities: The Effects of Formal and Informal Social Control," in Michael Tonry and Norval Morris, eds., Crime and Justice (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), pp. 271–301.

Moreover, data from Wisconsin dramatically illustrate that the rates of incarceration for its juvenile delinquents are 12 times higher for children of divorce than for children living with married parents.⁵ (See Chart 5.)

Different studies confirm the general conclusions from the Wisconsin data. For example:

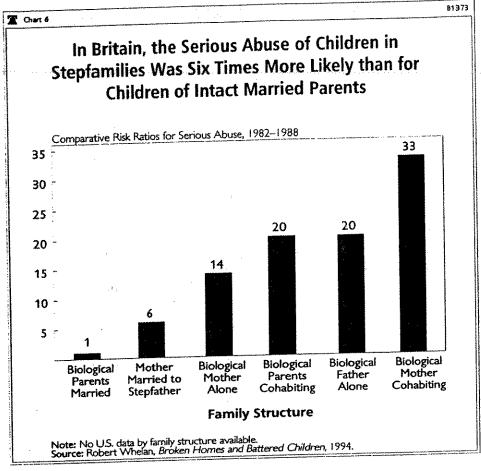
- Children of divorced parents are significantly more likely to become delinquent by age 15, regardless of when the divorce took place, than are children whose own parents are married.⁶
- A 1985 study tracked 1,000 families with children aged 6 to 18 for six years and found that children living in intact married families exhibited the least delinquency, while children with stepfathers were more likely to demonstrate the most disruptive behaviors.⁷
- In a British longitudinal study of males aged 8 to 32, David P. Farrington, professor of criminology at Cambridge University, found that the divorce of parents before a child reached age

- 10 is a major predictor of adolescent delinquency and adult criminality.⁸
- A recent U.S. longitudinal study which tracked over 6,400 boys over a period of 20 years (well into their adult years) found that children without biological fathers in the home are roughly three times more likely to commit a crime that leads to incarceration than are children from intact families.⁹

Moreover, as a major review of literature on divorce conducted by the government of Australia found, divorce increases the likelihood that a child will feel hostility and rejection. ¹⁰ Further research on the relationship between family background and crime indicates that rejection by peers can lead hostile children to join delinquent gangs. ¹¹ It is worth noting that these findings on delinquency are not confined to boys: Among adolescent girls, there is a strong correlation between family structure, delinquency, ¹² hostile behavior, ¹³ drug use, larceny, skipping school, ¹⁴ and alcohol abuse. ¹⁵

- 5. Wisconsin Department of Health and Social Services, Division of Youth Services, "Family Status of Delinquents in Juvenile Correctional Facilities in Wisconsin," April 1994. The data were merged with data from the Current Population Survey on family structure in Wisconsin for that year to derive rates of incarceration by family structure.
- 6. Abbie K. Frost and Bilge Pakiz, "The Effects of Marital Disruption on Adolescents: Time as a Dynamic," American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, Vol. 60 (1990), pp. 544–555. Others have found that children of divorced parents are up to six times more likely to be delinquent than children from intact families. See David B. Larson, James P. Swyers, and Susan S. Larson, The Costly Consequences of Divorce (Rockville, Md.: National Institute for Healthcare Research, 1995), p. 123.
- Annette U. Rickel and Thomas S. Langer, "Short-Term and Long-Term Effects of Marital Disruption on Children," American Journal of Community Psychology, Vol. 13 (1985), pp. 599

 –661. (In this study, children of single parents fell between these two groups in delinquency.)
- 8. David P. Farrington, "Implications of Criminal Career Research for the Prevention of Offending," Journal of Adolescence, Vol. 13 (1990), pp. 93-113.
- Cynthia Harper and Sara S. McLanahan, "Father Absence and Youth Incarceration," presented at the annual meeting of the American Sociological Association, 1998.
- 10. Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs, House of Representatives, Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia, To Have and To Hold (Canberra: Parliament of Australia, 1998), p. 36.
- 11. Patrick F. Fagan, "The Real Root Causes of Violent Crime: The Breakdown of Marriage, Family, and Community," Heritage Foundation Backgrounder No. 1026, March 17, 1995.
- 12. Karen Heimer, "Gender, Interaction, and Delinquency: Testing a Theory of Differential Social Control," Social Psychology Quarterly, Vol. 59 (1996), pp. 39-61.
- Bilge Pakiz, Helen Z. Reinherz, and Rose M. Giaconia, "Early Risk Factors for Serious Antisocial Behavior at Age 21: A Longitudinal Community Study," American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, Vol. 67 (1997), pp. 92–100.



Divorce and Abuse

Child abuse is closely related to delinquency and violent crime, and divorce is a relevant factor in an abused child's background. ¹⁶ Not only do higher levels of divorce accompany higher levels of child abuse, but remarriage does not reduce the level of child abuse and may even add to it. (See

Chart 6.) Sadly, huge differences in the rates of fatal child abuse accompany family structure. After a divorce, mothers may marry again or acquire new boyfriends, but the presence of a stepfather or a boyfriend increases the risk of abuse, though at significantly different rates.

- Serious abuse is much higher among stepchildren than among children of intact families, and adults who were sexually abused as children are more likely to have been raised in stepfamilies than in intact married families. ¹⁷
- The rate of sexual abuse of girls by their stepfathers is at least six or seven times higher, ¹⁸ and may be as

much as 40 times greater, ¹⁹ than sexual abuse of daughters by their biological fathers who remain in intact families.

Margo Wilson and Martin Daly, professors of psychology at McMasters University in Canada, report that children two years of age and

^{14.} Neil Kalter, B. Reimer, A. Brickman, and J. W. Chen, "Implications of Parental Divorce for Female Development," Journal of the American Academy of Child Psychiatry, Vol. 25 (1986), pp. 538–544.

^{15.} Frost and Pakiz, "The Effects of Marital Disruption on Adolescents," pp. 544-555.

Patrick F. Fagan: "The Child Abuse Crisis: The Disintegration of Marriage, Family, and the American Community," Heritage Foundation Backgrounder No. 1115, June 3, 1997.

^{17.} David M. Fergusson, Michael T. Lynskey, and L. John Horwood, "Childhood Sexual Abuse and Psychiatric Disorders in Young Adulthood: I. Prevalence of Sexual Abuse and Factors Associated with Sexual Abuse," Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, Vol. 34 (1996), pp. 1355–1364.

^{18.} Diana E. H. Russell, "The Prevalence and Seriousness of Incestuous Abuse: Stepfathers vs. Biological Fathers," Child Abuse and Neglect, Vol. 8 (1984), pp. 15–22.

^{19.} Margo Wilson and Martin Daly, "The Risk of Maltreatment of Children Living with Stepparents," in Richard J. Gelles and Jane B. Lancaster, eds., Child Abuse and Neglect: Biosocial Dimensions, Foundations of Human Behavior (New York: Aldine de Gruyter, 1987), p. 228.

younger are 70 to 100 times more likely to be killed at the hands of their stepparents than by their biological parents. ²⁰ (Younger children, because of their small size, are much more vulnerable.)

 The data from Britain predict a smaller risk, but this research is not as rigorous as the Canadian study. The British study reports that fatal abuse of children of all ages occurs three times more frequently in stepfamilies than in intact married families.²¹

When parents divorce, most children suffer. For some, this suffering turns into long-lasting psychological damage. Neglect of children, which can be psychologically more damaging than physical abuse, ²² is twice as high among separated and divorced parents. ²³

Stepparents have a difficult time establishing close bonds with their stepchildren—a common theme in literature that is confirmed in the research literature. The rate of bonding between stepparents and stepchildren is rather low. One study found that only 53 percent of stepfathers and 25 percent of stepmothers have "parental feelings" toward their stepchildren, and still fewer report having "love" for them.²⁴

Divorce and Addiction

Children who use drugs and abuse alcohol are more likely to come from family backgrounds characterized by parental conflict and parental rejection. Because divorce increases these factors, it increases the likelihood that children will abuse alcohol and begin using drugs. Adolescents whose parents recently divorced are found to abuse drugs and alcohol much more often than do adolescents whose parents divorced during their early childhood. When they are compared with children whose parents are still married, the difference grows even greater. ²⁵ Comparing all family structures, drug use in children is lowest in the intact married family. ²⁶

HOW DIVORCE AFFECTS EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT

Throughout a child's educational experience, the divorce of parents has an impact on learning and achievement.

Divorce and the Capacity to Learn

Divorce impedes learning by disrupting productive study patterns as children are forced to move between domiciles, and by increasing anxiety and depression in both parents and children. Because of its impact on stable home life, divorce can diminish the capacity to learn—a principle demonstrated by the fact that children whose parents divorce have lower rates of graduation from high school and college and also complete fewer college courses.

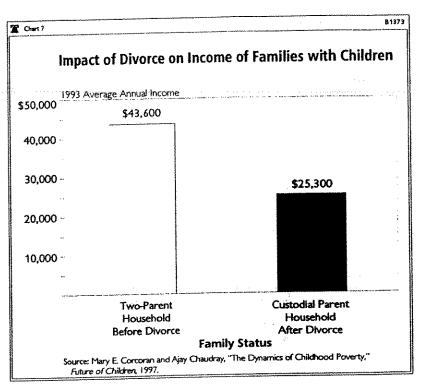
 In the "Impact of Divorce Project," a survey of 699 elementary students nationwide con-

- 20. Ibid., pp. 215-232.
- 21. Fagan, "The Child Abuse Crisis."
- 22. Richard Emery, "Abused and Neglected Children," The American Psychologist, Vol. 44, No. 2 (1989), pp. 321-328.
- Yuriko Egami, "Psychiatric Profile and Sociodemographic Characteristics of Adults Who Report Physically Abusing or Neglecting Children," American Journal of Psychiatry, Vol. 153 (1996), pp. 921–928.
- 24. David Popenoe, Life Without Father (New York: Martin Kessler Books, 1995), p. 57, quoting Lucile Duberman, The Reconstituted Family: A Study of Remarried Couples and Their Children (Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1975).
- 25. William J. Doherty and R. H. Needle, "Psychological Adjustment and Substance Use Among Adolescents Before and After a Parental Divorce," Child Development, Vol. 62 (1991), pp. 328–337.
- 26. John P. Hoffman and Robert A. Johnson, "A National Portrait of Family Structure and Adolescent Drug Use," Journal of Marriage and the Family, Vol. 60, No. 3 (1998), pp. 633–645; Robert L. Flewing and K. E. Baumann, "Family Structure as a Predictor of Initial Substance Use and Sexual Intercourse in Early Adolescence," Journal of Marriage and the Family, Vol. 52 (1990), pp. 171–181.

ducted by Kent State University in Ohio, children from divorced homes performed more poorly in reading, spelling, and math and repeated a grade more frequently than did children from intact two-parent families.²⁷

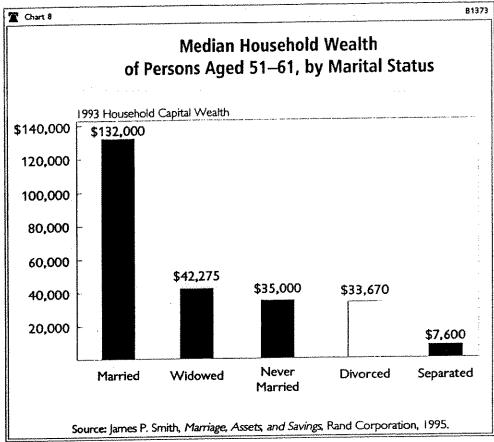
The absence of the father lowers cognitive test scores for young children in general, ²⁸ especially the math scores of daughters. ²⁹ By comparison, a girl's verbal capacities increase when the father is present, especially when he reads aloud to her when she is young. ³⁰ By age 13, there is an average difference of half a year in reading abilities between children of divorced parents and those who have intact families. ³¹ Even the most effective preventive work on reading and math skills does not eliminate the drop in performance at school among children of divorce. ³²

Frequent relocation of these children appears to play a large role in their poorer performance, regardless of family background. 33 Compared with children of intact families, children of broken



families—whether they have divorced parents or stepparents, or even an always-single parent—move about much more frequently.³⁴ Such moves tend to increase the incidence of behavioral, emotional, and academic problems for all adolescents, regardless of family structure.³⁵ Very young chil-

- 27. Popenoe, Life Without Father, p. 57. June O'Neill and Anne Hill, professors of business and government at Baruch College, City University of New York, also found that growing up with a divorced parent has a significant, negative effect on children's test scores. See M. Anne Hill and June O'Neill, "Family Endowments and the Achievement of Young Children with Special Reference to the Underclass," Journal of Human Resources, Vol. 29 (1994), pp. 1064–1100.
- 28. Mary Ann Powell and Toby L. Parcel, "Effects of Family Structure on the Earnings Attainment Process: Differences by Gender," Journal of Marriage and the Family, Vol. 59 (1997), p. 419, reporting on unpublished research by Frank Mott (1993), prepared for NIH/NICHD.
- 29. Popenoe, Life Without Father, p. 148, reporting on the findings of Goldstein (1982).
- 30. Ibid., reporting on the findings of Bing (1963).
- 31. Jim Stevenson and Glenda Fredman, "The Social Correlates of Reading Ability," Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry, Vol. 31 (1990), pp. 689–690.
- Linda J. Alpert-Gillis, JoAnne L. Pedro-Carroll, and Emory L. Cowen, "The Children of Divorce Intervention Program: Development, Implementation, and Evaluation of a Program for Young Urban Children," *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, Vol. 57 (1989), pp. 583–589.
- 33. See William S. Aquilino, "The Life Course of Children Born to Unmarried Mothers: Childhood Living Arrangements and Young Adult Outcomes," Journal of Marriage and the Family, Vol. 58 (1996), pp. 293–310.
- 34. Frances K. Goldscheider and Calvin Goldscheider, "The Effects of Childhood Family Structure on Leaving and Returning Home," Journal of Marriage and the Family, Vol. 60 (1998), p. 751.
- 35. Hoffman and Johnson, "A National Portrait of Family Structure and Adolescent Drug Use," p. 635.



dren are especially susceptible, since they are usually more attached to their home than older children are. Leaving their family home for another after their parents' divorce becomes even more traumatic because they tend to become more attached to their home during the breakup of their parents. ³⁶

Divorce and Graduation Rates

Divorce affects the grade level that children attain: High school dropout rates are much higher among children of divorced parents than among children of always-married parents.37 Even if the children's primary parent remarries, stepfamily life does not wipe out the educational losses generally experienced by these children. Schools may expel as many as one in four stepchildren, 38 though this ratio can fall to one in 10 if stepparents are highly involved in their children's school. 39 Children raised in intact families complete more total years of education and have

higher earnings than children from other family structures. 40 The advantage given by an intact family also holds for children in poor inner-city communities. 41

The divorce of parents also reduces the likelihood that a child will attain a college education. The college attendance rate is about 60 percent lower among children of divorced parents compared with children of intact families.⁴²

^{36.} Ruth Stirtzinger and Lorraine Cholvat, "Preschool Age Children of Divorce: Transitional Phenomena and the Mourning Process," Canadian Journal of Psychiatry, Vol. 35 (1990), pp. 506–514.

^{37.} Sara McLanahan and Gary D. Sandefur, Growing Up With a Single Parent: What Hurts, What Helps (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1994), p. 67.

^{38.} Deborah A. Dawson, "Family Structure and Children's Health and Well Being: Data from the 1988 National Survey of Child Health," Journal of Marriage and the Family, Vol. 53 (1991), pp. 573–584.

^{39.} Larson et al., The Costly Consequences of Divorce, p. 167, reporting on the findings of Zill and Nord (1994) and Lee (1993).

^{40.} Powell and Parcel, "Effects of Family Structure on the Earnings Attainment Process," p. 425.

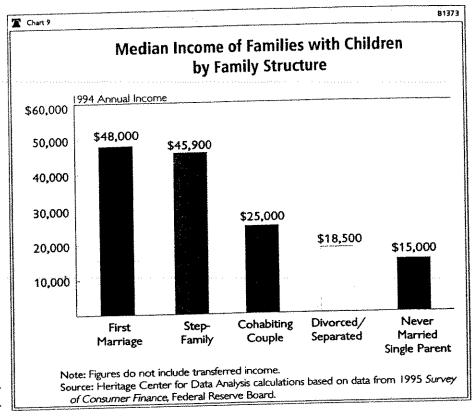
^{41.} Janet B. Hardy et al., "Self-Sufficiency at Ages 27–33 Years: Factors Present Between Birth and 18 Years that Predict Educational Attainment Among Children Born to Inner-City Families," *Pediatrics*, Vol. 99 (1997), pp. 80–87.

^{42.} Hillevi M. Aro and Ulla K. Palosaari, "Parental Divorce, Adolescence, and Transition to Young Adulthood: A Follow-Up Study," American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, Vol. 62, No. 3 (July 1992), pp. 421–429.

Judith Wallerstein, a clinical psychologist from San Francisco, found that of the college-age students who went to the same high schools in affluent Marin County near San Francisco, only twothirds of children from divorced families attended college compared with 85 percent of students from intact families. 43 The well-known high rates of college attainment by Asian-American children illustrate this point. Asian-Americans also seem to have the highest levels of intact family life of all American ethnic groups. (See Chart 4.)

Family income may make a difference in college attendance, and income in the custodial family falls after a divorce. 44 According to data reported in 1994 by

Mary Corcoran, professor of political science at the University of Michigan, "During the years children lived with two parents, their family incomes averaged \$43,600, and when these same children lived with one parent, their family incomes averaged \$25,300." (See Chart 7.) In other words, the household income of a child's custodial family dropped on average about 42 percent following divorce. Furthermore, parents' accumulated wealth is different across family structures and will affect the level of financial support available from parents for their children's college education. (See Chart 8 and Chart 9.)



HOW DIVORCE AFFECTS FAMILIES ECONOMICALLY

As the above information demonstrates, divorce has significant negative economic consequences for families. The breakup of families leaves one parent trying to do the work of two people—and one person cannot support a family as well as two can. Because of this, divorce has been shown to lead to decreased household income and a higher risk of poverty. It is a factor in a child's diminished level of academic achievement, which translates into lower earnings as an adult. 47

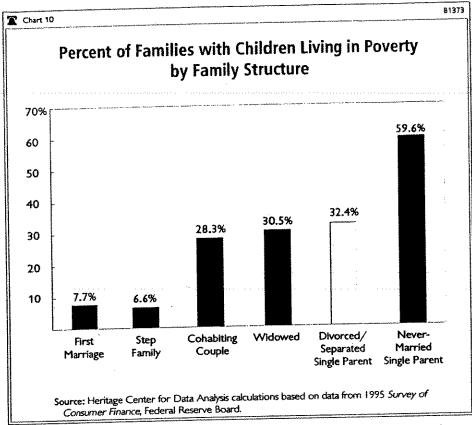
^{43.} Judith Wallerstein, "The Long Term Effects of Divorce on Children: A Review," Journal of the American Academy of Child Adolescent Psychiatry, Vol. 30 (1991), pp. 349–360.

^{44.} Powell and Parcel, "Effects of Family Structure on the Earnings Attainment Process," p. 419, reporting on the findings of Steelman and Powell (1991).

^{45.} Mary E. Corcoran and Ajay Chaudry, "The Dynamics of Childhood Poverty," Future of Children, Vol. 7, No. 2 (1997), pp. 40-54, reporting on Duncan et al. (1994).

^{46.} Peggy O. Corcoran, unpublished paper, Survey Research Center, University of Michigan, May 1994.

^{47.} See Patrick F. Fagan, "How Broken Families Rob Children of Their Chances of Future Prosperity," Heritage Foundation Backgrounder No. 1283, June 11, 1999.



Lower Income and Higher Incidences of Poverty

Divorce has a greater effect on the household income of the custodial parent than the Great Depression had on the American economy. Between 1929 and 1933, the economy contracted by 30.5 percent and the gross national product

(GNP) went from \$203 billion to \$141 billion (in constant 1958 dollars). ⁴⁸ Yet in each of the past 28 years, the households of over 1 million children have experienced an even greater contraction in incomewith an average drop of between 28 percent to 42 percent. ⁴⁹ For families that were not poor before a divorce, the drop in income can be as high as 50 percent. ⁵⁰

Although the custodial parent's household after a divorce will contain fewer persons than the pre-divorce home, the income loss for the custodial parent's home is generally great enough to cause the per capita income to fall when compared with pre-divorce conditions.

Moreover, divorce causes both parents to lose the economies of scale that are implicit in the larger pre-divorce household.

Almost 50 percent of households with children undergoing divorce move into poverty following the divorce. ⁵¹ Some 40 percent of families on Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) are divorced or separated single-parent households. ⁵²

^{48.} U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Historical Statistics of the United States, Bicentennial Edition, Colonial Times to 1970, Part I (Washington, D.C., 1976), p. 228.

^{49.} Divorce's immediate effects can be seen in data reported in 1994 by Mary Corcoran, professor of political science at the University of Michigan: "During the years children lived with two parents, their family incomes averaged \$43,600, and when these same children lived with one parent, their family incomes averaged \$25,300." In other words, the household income of a child's family dropped on average about 42 percent following divorce. See Corcoran and Chaudry, "The Dynamics of Childhood Poverty," pp. 40–54, quoting from G. J. Duncan et al., "Lone-Parent Families in the United States: Dynamics, Economic Status, and Developmental Consequences," unpublished paper, Survey Research Center, University of Michigan, May 1994.

^{50.} McLanahan and Sandefur, Growing Up With a Single Parent, p. 24.

^{51.} Julia Heath, "Determinants of Spells of Poverty Following Divorce," Review of Social Economy, Vol. 49 (1992), pp. 305-315.

^{52.} Committee on Ways and Means, U.S. House of Representatives, 1998 Green Book: Background Material and Data on Programs Within the Jurisdiction of the Committee on Ways and Means, May 19, 1998, p. 540. The AFDC program became the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program in 1996.

As Chart 10 shows, based on data from the Federal Reserve Board's 1995 Survey of Consumer Finance, the differing ratios of poverty among different family structures tell the story of the impact of marriage on income.

• Compared with the poverty rate of the always-intact married family, a widowed family experiences a poverty rate that is 3.9 times higher; the cohabiting-couple household's poverty rate is 3.7 times higher; the rate for divorced single-parent families is 4.2 times higher; and the rate for always-single-parent families is 7.7 times higher. The stepfamily has a lower poverty rate, most likely because the remarriage often takes place later in the life of parents, when their incomes will be somewhat higher. 53

Particularly for women whose pre-divorce family income was below the median family income level, the research shows that divorce is a primary factor in determining the length of a "poverty spell." Understandably, mothers who are employed at the time of a divorce are much less likely to become welfare recipients than mothers who do not work at the time of divorce. Mothers in this latter group go on welfare as frequently as single mothers who lose their jobs. ⁵⁵

HOW DIVORCE AFFECTS PERSONAL WELL-BEING

Harmful Mental and Physical Health Effects

It is increasingly clear that divorce affects the health of children in broken families in many ways. Most significantly, divorce leads to:

- Increased behavioral, emotional, and psychiatric burdens;
- Increased rates of suicide; and
- Increased risks for health problems.

Divorce wreaks havoc with the psychological stability of many children. ⁵⁶ Immediately upon the breakup of their families through divorce, children experience reactions ranging from anger, fear, and sadness to yearning, worry, rejection, conflicting loyalties, anger, ⁵⁷ lowered self-confidence, heightened anxiety and loneliness, more depressed moods, more suicidal thoughts, and even more attempts to commit suicide. ⁵⁸ Many of these feelings persist for years. For example:

 A major national survey of 20,000 adolescents found that the adolescent children of divorced parents did worse than their peers from intact families on such measures of satisfaction with life as happiness, sense of personal control, trust, and friendship.⁵⁹

- 53. The Survey of Consumer Finance underreports income in general, relative to the Current Population Survey of the U.S. Bureau of the Census. The undercount of income in the Survey of Consumer Finance yields higher overall poverty rates, but there is no reason to believe that the income undercount is biased in a manner that would significantly affect the relative probabilities of poverty by family type as represented in the text.
- 54. Committee on Ways and Means, 1998 Green Book, p. 540.
- 55. Philip K. Robins, "Child Support, Welfare Dependency, and Poverty," American Economic Review, Vol. 976 (1986), pp. 768–786.
- 56. Peter Hill, "Recent Advances in Selected Aspects of Adolescent Development," Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry, Vol. 34 (1993), pp. 69–99.
- 57. Judith S. Wallerstein and Joan Berlin Kelly, Surviving the Breakup: How Children and Parents Cope with Divorce (New York: Basic Books, 1980).
- 58. Nadia Garnefski and Rene F. W. Diekstra, "Adolescents from One Parent, Stepparent and Intact Families: Emotional Problems and Suicide Attempts," *Journal of Adolescence*, Vol. 20 (1997), pp. 201–208.
- 59. Alan C. Acock and K. Hill Kiecolt, "Is It Family Structure or Socioeconomic Status? Family Structure During Adolescence and Adult Adjustment," *Social Forces*, Vol. 68 (1989), pp. 553–571. This held true even after taking the effects of reduced income into account.

- The National Surveys of Children, a major longitudinal federal study done in three waves during the 1980s, found that divorce was associated with a higher incidence of several mental health problems in children: depression; withdrawal from friends and family; aggressive, impulsive, or hyperactive behavior; and either withdrawing from participation in the classroom or becoming disruptive. 60
- Researchers from Johns Hopkins University and the University of Chicago found that the adult children of divorced parents experience mental health problems significantly more often than do the adult children of intact families.⁶¹
- The General Social Surveys of 1996 and 1998 show that the incidence of adults not being "too happy" varies significantly, depending on the type of family in which they grew up: Those whose parents divorced have reported being not "too happy" at twice the rate of those who grew up with both of their parents. Those who had a parent die during childhood fall halfway between these happiness rates. 62
- The British National Longitudinal Study, which continuously tracked a national sample of children born in 1958, has shown that divorce is associated with a substantial 39 percent increase in the risk of psychopathology.⁶³

Children younger than five years of age are found to be particularly vulnerable to the emotional conflicts occurring during the separation and divorce of their parents. ⁶⁴ They cling more to their parents and regress more often to problems that are characteristic of younger children, such as bedwetting. Older children frequently withdraw from home life and seek intimacy away from home. ⁶⁵

Judith Wallerstein's study suggests that when divorce occurs in mid-childhood (between ages six and eight), a large portion of children experience persistent feelings of sadness and a need for constant reassurance about their performance in many of life's tasks. For these children, anxieties run very high about their relationships with the opposite sex, personal commitments later in life (particularly during the late high school years), and marriage. These young adults are most acutely concerned about betrayal in romantic relationships, both present and future; they also are concerned about being hurt or abandoned by a fiancé or spouse.66 Other studies have found the same pattern of "attachment insecurities" and low selfesteem among college students with divorced parents.67

If divorce occurs when the children are teenagers (12 to 15 years of age), they tend to react in two very different ways: by attempting to avoid growing up or by attempting to "speed through"

- 60. Popenoe, Life Without Father, p. 62, reporting on the work of Wells, Rankin, Demo, and Acock.
- 61. Andrew J. Cherlin, P. Lindsay Chase-Lansdale, and Christine McRae, "Effects of Parental Divorce on Mental Health Throughout the Life Course," American Sociological Review, Vol. 63 (April 1998), pp. 245–246.
- 62. Personal communication from Thomas Smith, Ph.D., NORC, University of Chicago, reporting on data from the General Social Survey on "not too happy," which found that 8.8 percent lived with both parents; for 12.7 percent, a parent had died; for 15.7 percent, parents were divorced.
- 63. P. Lindsay Chase-Lansdale, Andrew J. Cherlin, and Kathleen E. Kiernan, "The Long-Term Effects of Parental Divorce on the Mental Health of Young Adults: A Developmental Perspective," Child Development, Vol. 66 (1995), pp. 1614–1634.
- 64. Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs, To Have and To Hold, p. 35.
- 65. Ibid., p. 34, reporting on the research of M. P. Richards and M. Dyson.
- 66. Judith S. Wallerstein, "Children of Divorce: Report of a Ten-Year Follow-Up of Early Latency-Age Children," American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, Vol. 57 (1987), pp. 199-211.
- 67. Julie J. Evans and Bernard L. Bloom, "Effects of Parental Divorce Among College Undergraduates," Journal of Divorce and Remarriage, Vol. 26 (1997), pp. 69–88.

adolescence. 68 Other disturbing outcomes for teenagers include increased aggression, loss of self-confidence, 69 and particularly a sense of loneliness. 70 Boys are much more likely to be depressed than girls. 71 Early sexual activity, substance abuse or dependence, hostile behavior, and depression also are more likely following a divorce. These reactions are more likely if the parents divorce before the child reaches age five, slightly less likely if they divorce after the child reaches age 10, and seemingly least likely during the years in between—a period sometimes called "the latency phase" by psychologists. 72

Unlike the experience of their parents, the child's suffering does not reach its peak at the time of the divorce and then level off. Rather, the emotional effects of the parents' divorce can be played and replayed throughout the next three decades of a child's life. To instance, one longitudinal study tracked children whose parents divorced in 1946 and tested them two and three decades later. Even 30 years after the divorce, negative long-term

effects were clearly present in the income, health, and behavior of many of the grown offspring.⁷⁴

These long-lasting effects are found in country after country. The British National Longitudinal Study cited above found a strong link between parental divorce during the middle and late childhood years (ages seven through 16) and significantly lower mental health status in young adulthood, with a 39 percent increase in the risk of psychopathology. 75 A large Finnish study found that at age 22, children of divorced parents experienced more frequent loss of jobs, more conflict with their bosses, and more separation and divorce; they also had more abortions. 76 A large Swedish sample (over 14,000) confirms again the negative mental health effects of parents' divorce on children, no matter what the socioeconomic status of the family may be. 77 German research vields similar findings, 78 and a recent Australian parliamentary report reached similar conclusions. 79

^{68.} Murray M. Kappelman, "The Impact of Divorce on Adolescents," American Family Physician, Vol. 35 (1987), pp. 200-206.

^{69.} Michael Workman and John Beer, "Aggression, Alcohol Dependency, and Self-Consciousness Among High School Students of Divorced and Non-Divorced Parents," Psychological Reports, Vol. 71 (1992), pp. 279–286.

^{70.} Randy M. Page, "Adolescent Loneliness: A Priority for School Health Education," Health Education Quarterly, Vol. 15 (1988), pp. 20–23.

^{71.} Ronald L. Simons, Khui-Hsu Lin, Leslie C. Gordon, Rand D. Conger, and Frederick O. Lorenz, "Explaining the Higher Incidence of Adjustment Problems Among Children of Divorce Compared with Those in Two-Parent Families," Journal of Marriage and the Family, Vol. 61 (1999), pp. 1020–1033.

^{72.} David M. Fergusson, John Horwood, and Michael T. Lynsky, "Parental Separation, Adolescent Psychopathology, and Problem Behaviors," Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, Vol. 33 (1994), pp. 1122–1131.

^{73.} Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs, To Have and to Hold, p. 39.

^{74.} Ibid., p. 35.

^{75.} Chase-Lansdale et al., "The Long-Term Effects of Parental Divorce on the Mental Health of Young Adults," pp. 1614-1634.

^{76.} Aro and Palosaari, "Parental Divorce, Adolescence, and Transition to Young Adulthood," pp. 421-429.

^{77.} Popenoe, Life Without Father, p. 58, reporting on the findings of Duncan W. T. G. Timms, "Family Structure in Childhood and Mental Health in Adolescence," research report, Project Metropolitan, Department of Sociology, University of Stockholm, Sweden, p. 93.

^{78.} Hans-Christoph Steirthausen et al., "Family Composition and Child Psychiatric Disorders," Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, Vol. 26 (1987), pp. 242-246.

^{79.} Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs, To Have and To Hold, p. 35, reporting on Wadsworth (1984) and Kuh and Maclean (1990).

Increasing Rates of Suicide

Higher divorce rates in a society lead to higher suicide rates among children. As the work of Patricia McCall, a sociology professor at North Carolina State University, shows, the most frequent background characteristic among adolescents who commit suicide is the divorce of their parents.⁸⁰

This link between the rise in adolescent suicide in the past three decades and parental divorce can be found again and again in the literature;⁸¹ and in cross-cultural studies of Japan and the United States,⁸² as well as Holland, the link between divorce and the frequency of thoughts of suicide is clear.⁸³

Suicide is often triggered by the child's thoughts that his parents have rejected him⁸⁴ or lost interest in him.⁸⁵ Such a perception on the part of the child is sometimes based in reality.

Increased Health Risks

Divorce affects not only the emotional and mental life of the child, but also his physical healtheven the length of his life. According to one study, the life spans of children whose parents divorce before the children have reached their 21st birthday are shortened by an average of four years.⁸⁶

A longitudinal study that tracked over 1,500 privileged middle-class children with high IQs over their life span found a significantly higher mortality rate for those whose parents divorced, compared with those from intact families. ⁸⁷ Another study found that these mortality rates increase when the divorce occurs before the child's fourth birthday. ⁸⁸

Health effects during childhood include a doubling of the risk of asthma and a significant increase in injury rates. ⁸⁹ A separate study confirmed these findings and went on to note that the negative health effects of divorce did not abate when the mother remarried. ⁹⁰ Swedish researchers have found that, even in early adulthood, differences in health risk and rates of hospitalization are apparent after controlling for family and social background. (They also found the increased mortality rates mentioned above.) ⁹¹

- 80. Patricia L. McCall and Kenneth C. Land, "Trends in White Male Adolescent, Young-Adult, and Elderly Suicide: Are There Common Underlying Structural Factors?" Social Science Research, Vol. 23 (1994), pp. 57–81.
- 81. Larson et al., The Costly Consequences of Divorce, p. 124; Carmen Noevi Velez and Patricia Cohen, "Suicidal Behavior and Ideation in a Community Sample of Children: Maternal and Youth Reports," Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, Vol. 27, (1988), pp. 349–356; Franklyn L. Nelson et al., "Youth Suicide in California: A Comparative Study of Perceived Causes and Interventions," Community Mental Health Journal, Vol. 24, (1988), pp. 31–42.
- 82. David Lester and Kazuhiko Abe, "The Regional Variation of Divorce Rates in Japan and the United States," Journal of Divorce and Remarriage, Vol. 18 (1993), pp. 227–230.
- 83. Spruijt and de Goede, "Transition in Family Structure and Adolescent Well-Being," pp. 897-911.
- 84. Larson et al., The Costly Consequences of Divorce, p. 126.
- 85. John S. Wodarski and Pamela Harris, "Adolescent Suicide: A Review of Influences and the Means for Prevention," Social Work, Vol. 32 (1987), pp. 477–484.
- 86. Joseph E. Schwartz et al., "Sociodemographic and Psychosocial Factors in Childhood as Predictors of Adult Mortality," American Journal of Public Health, Vol. 85 (1995), pp. 1237–1245.
- 87. Joan S. Tucker et al., "Parental Divorce: Effects on Individual Behavior and Longevity," Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, Vol. 73 (1997), pp. 385–386.
- 88. Gopal K. Singh and Stella M. Yu, "U.S. Childhood Mortality, 1950 through 1993: Trends and Socioeconomic Differentials," American Journal of Public Health, Vol. 86 (1996), pp. 505–512.
- 89. Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs, To Have and To Hold, p. 35.
- 90. Jane Mauldon, "The Effect of Marital Disruption on Children's Health," Demography, Vol. 27 (1990), p. 439.

HOW DIVORCE AFFECTS THE FAMILY

Divorce affects all the major institutions of society, but none more than the family itself and the child's capacity to sustain family life as an adult. The severing of the relationship between mother and father rends the hearts of most children, making their own capacity to have deep and trusting relationships more tenuous. For many children, the divorce of their parents is the beginning of an intergenerational cycle of family fracturing that is passed on to their children and grandchildren.

Because of the negative impacts that divorce has on educational attainment, health, community life, and (as will be shown below) religious worship, it is particularly troubling that divorce seems to perpetuate itself across successive generations. The negative impact of divorce on home life is so strong that children of divorced parents struggle as adults to create a positive, healthy family environment for their own children. All too often, adults who experienced divorce as children prove less capable of breaking the cycle and instead pass on a legacy of tragedy to their children and their children's children.

Specifically, divorce leads to the following:

- Weaker parent-child relationships;
- Destructive ways of handling conflict within the family;
- Diminished social competency with peers;
- A diminished sense of masculinity or femininity in adolescence;
- Troubled courtships;

- Increases in premarital teenage sexual activity, number of sexual partners during adolescence, and out-of-wedlock childbirths;
- Higher numbers of children leaving home earlier, as well as higher levels of cohabitation for these children; and
- Higher divorce rates for the children of divorced parents.

Weakened Parent-Child Relationships

Not only do parents divorce each other, but they in effect divorce or partially divorce their children. The primary effect of divorce (and of the conflicts that lead to divorce) is the deterioration of the relationship between the child and at least one parent. Often, a deterioration of relations occurs between the child and both the custodial and noncustodial parents. Divorced mothers, despite their best intentions, are less able than married mothers to give the same level of emotional support to their children. Divorced fathers are less likely to have a close relationship with their children; and the younger the children are at the time of the divorce, the more likely the father is to drift away from regular contact with the children.

Divorce presents most parents with two sets of problems: their personal adjustment to the divorce and their adjustment to the new and different role of divorced parent. As many as 40 percent are so stressed by the divorce that their child-rearing behavior suffers. They frequently change from rigid to permissive behavior, and from emotionally distant to emotionally dependent. 96

- 91. Family in America Digital Archive (Rockford, Ill.: Rockford Institute, 1996), p. 854, reporting on Anders Romelsjö et al. (1992).
- 92. Elizabeth Meneghan and Toby L. Parcel, "Social Sources of Change in Children's Home Environments: The Effects of Parental Occupational Experiences and Family Conditions," *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, Vol. 57 (1995), pp. 69–84, and Spruijt and de Goede, "Transition in Family Structure and Adolescent Well-Being," pp. 897–911.
- 93. Jane E. Miller and Diane Davis, "Poverty History, Marital History, and Quality of Children's Home Environments," Journal of Marriage and the Family, Vol. 59 (1997), pp. 996–1007.
- 94. Yoram Weiss and Robert J. Willis, "Children as Collective Goods and Divorce Settlements," Journal of Labor Economics, Vol. 3 (1985), pp. 268–292.
- 95. Wallerstein and Kelly, Surviving the Breakup, pp. 224-225.

After divorce, children tend to become more emotionally distant from both the custodial and non-custodial parent. ⁹⁷ This distancing effect is stronger than the similar effect that occurs among children living with parents who are married but unhappy and quarreling with each other. ⁹⁸

Compared with continuously married mothers, divorced mothers—whether custodial or non-custodial—are likely to be less affectionate and less communicative with their children and to discipline them more harshly and more inconsistently, especially in the first year after the divorce. ⁹⁹ In particular, divorced mothers have problems with their sons, though their relationship is likely to improve within two years ¹⁰⁰ even when some discipline problems persist up to six years after the divorce. ¹⁰¹

Children's contact with their fathers does not fare well, especially for non-custodial fathers.

Their contact declines over time, though this pat-

tern is less pronounced the older the child is when the divorce occurs. 102

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, the National Survey of Families and Households found that about one in five divorced fathers had not seen their children in the past year, and less than half the fathers saw their children more than a few times a year. ¹⁰³ By adolescence (between the ages of 12 and 16), less than half of children living with their separated, divorced, or remarried mothers had seen their fathers at all in more than one year, and only one in six saw their fathers as often as once a week. ¹⁰⁴ In addition, paternal grandparents frequently cease to see their grandchildren as their son's contact with his children diminishes. ¹⁰⁵

The quality of the relationship that divorced fathers have with their sons, often troubled before the divorce, tends to become significantly worse after the breakup. ¹⁰⁶ Finally, the higher the level of conflict during the divorce, the more likely the distance between father and children afterwards. ¹⁰⁷

- 96. Robert Emery, Marriage, Divorce, and Children's Adjustment (Newbury Park, Cal.: Sage Publications, 1988), pp. 81-86.
- 97. Paul R. Amato and Alan Booth, A Generation at Risk (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997), p. 69, reporting the findings of Rossi and Rossi (1991).
- 98. Ibid., p. 73. Such unhappy but married families frequently exhibit many of the effects of divorce. See Paul R. Amato and Alan Booth, "Consequences of Parental Divorce and Marital Unhappiness for Adult Well-Being," Social Forces, Vol. 69 (1991), pp. 895–914.
- 99. E. Mavis Hetherington, Roger Cox, and Martha Cox, "Effects of Divorce on Parents and Children in Nontraditional Families," in Michael E. Lamb, ed., Parenting and Child Development (New York: L. Erlbaum Associates, 1982), pp. 223–288. There is increasing evidence that many divorced families had these patterns long before the divorce. See Paul R. Amato and Alan Booth, "A Prospective Study of Divorce and Parent—Child Relationships," Journal of Marriage and the Family, Vol. 58 (1996), p. 357, and Miller and Davis, "Poverty History, Marital History, and Quality of Children's Home Environments," p. 1004.
- 100. Hetherington et al., "Effects of Divorce on Parents and Children," pp. 223-288.
- 101. E. Mavis Hetherington, Roger Cox, and Martha Cox, "Long-Term Effects of Divorce and Remarriage on the Adjustment of Children," Journal of the American Academy of Child Psychiatry, Vol. 24 (1985), pp. 518–530.
- 102. Judith A. Seltzer, "Relationships Between Fathers and Children Who Live Apart: The Father's Role After Separation, Journal of Marriage and the Family, Vol. 53 (1991), pp. 79–102.
- 103. This federally funded survey of 13,000 respondents was conducted by the University of Wisconsin in 1987–1988 and again in 1992–1994. See Seltzer, "Relationships Between Fathers and Children Who Live Apart."
- 104. Popenoe, Life Without Father, p. 31, reporting on the findings of the National Survey of Children.
- 105. Janet Finch and Jennifer Mason, "Divorce, Remarriage and Family Obligations," Sociological Review, Vol. 38 (1990), pp. 231–234.
- 106. Nicholas Zill, Daniel Morrison, and M. J. Coiro, "Long Term Effects of Parental Divorce on Parent-Child Relationships, Adjustment, and Achievement in Young Adulthood," *Journal of Family Psychology*, Vol. 7 (1993), pp. 91–103.

These facts do not bode well for the lifetime happiness of children of divorce. Young adults who feel emotionally close to their fathers tend to be happier and more satisfied in life, regardless of their feelings toward their mothers. 108 These effects are somewhat mitigated the older the child is when the divorce takes place, the closer the children live to the father, and the more frequently they see him. 109

The relationships of father to daughter and mother to son have their own special twists: Boys, especially if they are living with their mothers, respond with more hostility to parental divorce than girls do, both immediately after the divorce and for a period of years thereafter. Girls often fare worse when living with adult men, either their father or a stepfather. 110 By the time children particularly daughters-attend college, their affection for their divorced father has waned significantly. 111

Stepfamily life does not solve these problems. The level of contact between the children and their natural parents is not restored to the level enjoyed by children in intact families. 112 Nor does remarriage restore the enjoyment of the role of parent for most divorced parents. They have fewer enjoyable times with their children, more disagreements with them, and more altercations than intact families do. 113

Moreover, children of divorced parents rate the support they receive from home much lower than do children from intact homes. 114 These negative ratings become more pronounced by the time they are in high school 115 and college. 116

Even older young adults whose parents divorce report turmoil and disruption. They deeply dislike the strains and difficulties that arise in daily rituals, family celebrations, family traditions, and special occasions and see these losses as major. 117

Grown children continue to view their parents' divorce quite differently than the parents do. Psychologist Judith Wallerstein was the first to disturb the nation with her widely reported research on the effects of divorce on children. 118 Her research continued through many follow-up studies on the

^{107.} Janet Johnston, "High Conflict Divorce," The Future of Children, Vol. 4 (1994), pp. 165-182, and Amato and Booth, A Generation at Risk, p. 68, reporting the findings of numerous authors.

^{108.} Paul Amato, "Father-Child Relations, Mother-Child Relations and Offspring Psychological Well-Being in Early Adulthood," Journal of Marriage and the Family, Vol. 56 (1994), pp. 1031-1042.

^{109.} Amato and Booth, A Generation at Risk, p. 80.

^{110.} Martha J. Zaslow, "Sex Differences in Children's Response to Parental Divorce: Two Samples, Variables, Ages, and Sources," American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, Vol. 59 (1989), pp. 118-141.

^{111.} Theresa M. Cooney, Michael A. Smyer, Gunhild O. Hagstad, and Robin Klock, "Parental Divorce in Young Adulthood: Some Preliminary Findings," American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, Vol. 56 (1986), pp. 470-477.

^{112.} Diane N. Lye, Daniel H. Klepinger, Patricia Davis Hyle, and Anjanette Nelson, "Childhood Living Arrangements and Adult Children's Relations with Their Parents," Demography, Vol. 32 (1995), pp. 261-280.

^{113.} Alan C. Acock and David H. Demo, Family Diversity and Well-Being (Thousand Oaks, Cal.: Sage Publications, 1994), Chapter 5.

^{114.} Miller and Davis, "Poverty History, Marital History, and Quality of Children's Home Environments," p. 1002.

^{115.} Thomas S. Parish, "Evaluations of Family by Youth: Do They Vary as a Function of Family Structure, Gender and Birth Order?" Adolescence, Vol. 25 (1990), pp. 354-356.

^{116.} Thomas S. Parish, "Evaluations of Family as a Function of One's Family Structure and Sex," Perceptual and Motor Skills, Vol. 66 (1988), pp. 25-26.

^{117.} Marjorie A. Pett, Nancy Long, and Anita Gander, "Late-Life Divorce: Its Impact on Family Rituals," Journal of Family Issues, Vol. 13 (1992), pp. 526-552.

^{118.} From research on children from families in the affluent Marin County near San Francisco.

children. Wallerstein found that 15 years after the divorce, while 80 percent of divorced mothers and 50 percent of divorced fathers felt that the divorce was good for them, only 10 percent of the children felt positive about it. 119

This emotional distance between children and parents lasts well into adulthood and may become permanent. As adults, children of divorced parents are half as likely to be close to their parents as are children of intact families. They have less frequent contact with the parent with whom they grew up¹²⁰ and much less contact with the divorced parent from whom they have been separated. The financial assistance, practical help, and emotional support between parents and children diminish more quickly than they do in intact families. 122

Also, children of divorce are less likely to think they should support their parents in old age. ¹²³ This finding alone portends a monumental problem for the much-divorced baby-boom generation that will become the dependent generation of elderly during the first half of this new century.

Destructive Ways of Handling Conflict

Divorce diminishes the capacity of children to handle conflict. One important difference between marriages that stay intact and those that end in divorce is the couple's ability to handle conflict and move toward agreement. Children of divorced parents can acquire the same incapacity to work through conflict from their parents.

For instance, compared with students from intact families, college students from divorced families use violence more frequently to resolve conflict. They are more likely to be aggressive and physically violent with their friends, both male and female. ¹²⁴ In their own marriages, children of divorced parents are more likely to be unhappy, to escalate conflicts, to reduce communication with their spouses, to argue, to shout when arguing, and to assault their spouses physically when they argue. ¹²⁵ Thus, the destructive ways of handling conflict that lead to divorce can be transmitted across generations. ¹²⁶

Diminished Social Competence

Adolescents who have the ability to get along with peers have acquired a significant social skill that can lead to greater happiness in their adult

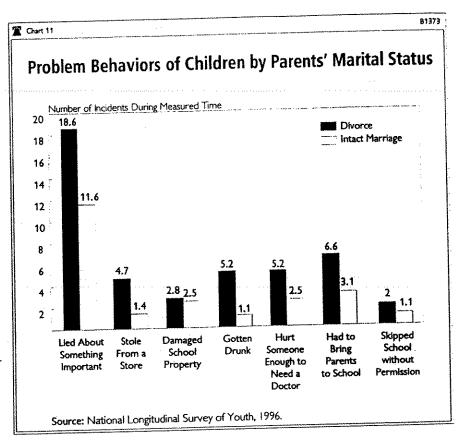
- 119. As reported in Larson et al., The Costly Consequences of Divorce, p. 42.
- 120. Amato and Booth, "Consequences of Parental Divorce and Marital Unhappiness for Adult Well-Being," pp. 895–914, and Theresa M. Cooney, "Young Adults' Relations with Parents: The Influence of Recent Parental Divorce," *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, Vol. 56 (1994), pp. 45–56.
- 121. Lye et al., "Childhood Living Arrangements and Adult Children's Relations with Their Parents," pp. 261–280, and William S. Aquilino, "Later-Life Parental Divorce and Widowhood: Impact on Young Adults' Assessment of Parent-Child Relations," Journal of Marriage and the Family, Vol. 56 (1994), pp. 908–922.
- 122. Amato and Booth, A Generation at Risk, p. 69, and Teresa M. Cooney and Peter Uhlenberg, "Support from Parents over the Life Course: The Adult Child's Perspective," Social Forces, Vol. 71 (1991), pp. 63–83.
- 123. Aquilino, "Later-Life Parental Divorce and Widowhood," pp. 908-922.
- 124. Robert E. Billingham and Nicole L. Notebaert, "Divorce and Dating Violence Revisited: Multivariate Analyses Using Straus's Conflict Tactics Subscores," Psychological Reports, Vol. 73 (1993), pp. 679–684.
- 125. Pamela S. Webster, Terri L. Orbuch, and James S. House, "Effects of Childhood Family Background on Adult Marital Quality and Perceived Stability," American Journal of Sociology, Vol. 101 (1995), pp. 404–432.
- 126. Researchers have found that children of violent parents fare better in general if their parents separate rather than stay together. However, if the parents' conflict is not violent or intense, children fare better in their own marriages if the parents stay married rather than divorce. See Amato and Booth, A Generation at Risk, p. 115. The best solution to restore family harmony would be for parents to learn how to handle conflict and for violent spouses to become nonviolent and learn to cooperate.

family life and in the workplace. The parental conflicts that surround divorce and the social disruption that accompanies it place this competence at risk.

When parents are in the throes of a divorce, the conflict is often accompanied by less affection, less responsiveness, and more punitive acts toward the children-all of which leaves the children feeling emotionally insecure 127 and more likely to believe that their social milieu is unpredictable and uncontrollable. 128 The worst troublemaker in school, the child who engages in fighting and stealing, is far more likely to come from a broken home than is one that is wellbehaved. 129 (See Chart 11.)

Gerald Patterson of the Oregon Social Learning Center says that

"[p]oor social skills, characterized by aversive or coercive interaction styles, lead directly to rejection by normal peers." 130 Fear of peer rejection is twice as likely among adolescents of divorced parents. 131 They are likely to have fewer childhood friends and to complain more about the lack of support they receive from the friends they have. 132



The faculty at Kent State University conducted a major national study on the effects of divorce. The findings: Compared with children in intact families, the children of divorced parents do more poorly in ratings by their parents and teachers on their peer relationships, hostility toward adults,

^{127.} Amato and Booth, A Generation at Risk, p. 137, reviewing the findings of Davies and Cummings (1994).

^{128.} Ibid.

^{129.} Rex Forehand, "Family Characteristics of Adolescents Who Display Overt and Covert Behavior Problems," Journal of Behavior Therapy and Experimental Psychiatry, Vol. 18 (1987), pp. 325-328.

^{130.} John M. Gottman and John T. Parkhurst, "A Developmental Theory of Friendship and Acquaintanceship Processes," Minnesota Symposium on Child Psychology, 1978, cited in Gerald R. Patterson and Thomas J. Dishion, "Contributions of Families and Peers to Delinquency," Criminology, Vol. 23 (1985), pp. 63-79.

^{131.} Dorothy Tysse Breen and Margaret Crosbie-Burnett, "Moral Dilemmas of Early Adolescents of Divorced and Intact Families: A Qualitative and Quantitative Analysis," Journal of Early Adolescence, Vol. 13 (1993), pp. 168-182.

^{132.} Sylvie Drapeau and Camil Bouchard, "Support Networks and Adjustment Among 6 to 16-Year-Olds from Maritally Disrupted and Intact Families," Journal of Divorce and Remarriage, Vol. 19 (1993), pp. 75-94. Daughters of divorced parents in a University of Michigan study had significantly greater difficulty in having and keeping friends and were more frequently depressed when at college. See Kristen M. McCabe, "Sex Differences in the Long-Term Effects of Divorce on Children: Depression and Heterosexual Relationship Difficulties in the Young Adult Years," Journal of Divorce and Remarriage, Vol. 27 (1997), pp. 123-134.

anxiety, withdrawal, inattention, and aggression. 133

Diminished Sense of Femininity or Masculinity

Many teenagers struggle with feelings of inadequacy and frequently turn these feelings into erroneous judgments of peer rejection. Daughters of divorce find it more difficult to value their femininity or to believe that they are genuinely lovable. Sons of divorced parents frequently demonstrate less confidence in their ability to relate with women, either at work or romantically.¹³⁴

Children, especially pre-teen children (ages nine to 12), who maintain a good relationship and frequent contact with their fathers after a divorce are better able to maintain their self-confidence. Attachment to their mothers alone does not suffice to build self-confidence. As pointed out above, however, contact with fathers generally diminishes over time.

Increased Trouble in Courtship

The divorce of parents makes romance and courtship more difficult and tenuous for the children as they reach adulthood. 137 Older teenagers

and young adults date more often, have more failed romantic relationships, and experience a more rapid turnover of dating partners. ¹³⁸ Not surprisingly, this leads to a greater number of sexual partners, which in itself creates a grave risk that one will acquire an incurable sexually transmitted disease. ¹⁴⁰

These effects on dating seem to be the strongest when the divorce takes place during the child's teenage years, ¹⁴¹ but they also carry into adulthood. Young adult children of divorced parents trust their fiancés less (they expect them to give less and to be less committed) and tend to love their partners less altruistically (they give less and are not to be expected to give as much). ¹⁴² They fear being rejected, and the lack of trust frequently hinders a deepening of their relationships. ¹⁴³

The divorce of parents changes the marriage expectations of their children. Compared with children of always-married parents, children of divorced parents have more positive attitudes toward divorce, ¹⁴⁴ have less favorable attitudes toward marriage, ¹⁴⁵ are less likely to insist on a lifelong marital commitment, ¹⁴⁶ and are less likely to think positively of themselves as potential parents. ¹⁴⁷ These differences in attitudes among chil-

- 133. John Guidubaldi, Joseph D. Perry, and Bonnie K. Nastasi, "Growing Up in a Divorced Family: Initial and Long Term Perspectives on Children's Adjustment," *Applied Social Psychology Annual*, Vol. 7 (1987), pp. 202–237.
- 134. Neil Kalter, "Long-Term Effects of Divorce on Children: A Developmental Vulnerability Model," American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, Vol. 57 (1987), pp. 595–597.
- 135. See Elizabeth S. Scott, "Rational Decision Making About Marriage and Divorce," Virginia Law Review, Vol. 76, No. 9 (1990), pp. 28–38.
- 136. Susan J. McCurdy and Avraham Scherman, "Effects of Family Structure on the Adolescent Separation-Individuation Process," *Adolescence*, Vol. 31 (1996), pp. 307–318.
- 137. Spruijt and de Goede, "Transition in Family Structure and Adolescent Well-Being," pp. 897-911.
- 138. Medical Institute for Sexual Health, Sexual Health Today (Austin, Tex.: Medical Institute of Sexual Health, 1997), p. 105.
- 139. Amato and Booth, A Generation at Risk, p. 107, summing up the findings of Booth, Brinkerhoff, and White (1984); Furstenberg and Teitler (1994); Hetherington (1972); Newcomer and Udry (1987).
- 140. Institute of Medicine, The Hidden Epidemic (Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press, 1997), Chapter 3 and Chapter 4.
- 141. Amato and Booth, A Generation at Risk, p. 111.
- 142. Heather E. Sprague and Jennifer M. Kinney, "The Effects of Interparental Divorce and Conflict on College Students' Romantic Relationships," *Journal of Divorce and Remarriage*, Vol. 27 (1997), pp. 85–104.
- 143. Stacy Glaser Johnston and Amanda McCombs Thomas, "Divorce Versus Intact Parental Marriage and Perceived Risk and Dyadic Trust in Present Heterosexual Relationships," Psychological Reports, Vol. 78 (1996), pp. 387–390.

dren of divorced parents are noticeable even as early as kindergarten. 148

To avoid divorce, 149 some children of divorced parents become more selective in choosing a marriage partner, while some remain very uncertain of marriage and their own ability to handle it. 150 Judith Wallerstein, in studying the children of divorced parents in Marin County, California, found that even a decade after a divorce, children experienced persistent anxiety about their own chances of having a happy marriage. This anxiety interfered with their ability to form a lasting marriage; some failed to form satisfying romantic ties, while others rushed into impulsive unhappy marriages. 151

Men whose parents have divorced are more inclined to be simultaneously hostile and a "rescuer" of the women to whom they are attracted than are the men raised by parents of an intact marriage. The latter group's style is more open,

affectionate, and cooperative. 152 Women whose parents divorced are more likely to be hampered or even overwhelmed by anxiety when it comes time to decide on marriage. 153 The problem of being overly meek or overly dominant, both of which indicate a lack of capacity to arrive at consensual agreement with others, is much more prevalent in the romantic relationships and marriages of the children of divorced parents than it is among children of intact marriages. 154

Increase in Teen Sex, Multiple Partners, and Out-of-Wedlock Births

When parents divorce, their children's attitudes about sexual behavior change. Children's approval of premarital sex and cohabitation and divorce rises dramatically, while their endorsement of marriage and childbearing is reduced. 155

American 156 and British 157 studies show that daughters of divorced parents will be more likely

- 144. Paul R. Amato and Alan Booth, "The Consequences of Divorce for Attitudes Toward Divorce and Gender Roles," Journal of Family Issues, Vol. 12 (1991), pp. 306-322.
- 145. A. Marlene Jennings, Connie J. Salts, and Thomas A. Smith, Jr., "Attitudes Toward Marriage: Effects of Parental Conflict, Family Structure, and Gender," Journal of Divorce and Remarriage, Vol. 17 (1992), pp. 67-78.
- 146. Kristen A. Moore and Thomas M. Stief, "Changes in Marriage and Fertility Behavior: Behavior Versus Attitudes of Young Adults," unpublished study, Child Trends, Inc., Washington, D.C., July 1989.
- 147. Jennifer Langhinrichsen-Rohling and Colleen Dostal, "Retrospective Reports of Family-of-Origin Divorce and Abuse and College Students' Pre-Parenthood Cognitions," Journal of Family Violence, Vol. 11 (1996), pp. 331-348.
- 148. Elizabeth Mazur, "Developmental Differences in Children's Understanding of Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage," Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology, Vol. 14 (1993), pp. 191-212.
- 149. Paul Amato, "Explaining the Intergenerational Transmission of Divorce," Journal of Marriage and the Family, Vol. 58 (1996), p. 628, reviewing the findings of Amato (1987); Amato and Booth (1991); Thornton and Freedman (1982).
- 150. Judith Wallerstein and Sandra Blakeslee, Second Chances: Men, Women, and Children a Decade After Divorce (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1996), Part III.
- 151. Ibid, pp. 169-172.
- 152. Silvio Silvestri, "Marital Instability in Men from Intact and Divorced Families: Interpersonal Behavior, Cognitions and Intimacy," Journal of Divorce and Remarriage, Vol. 18 (1992), pp. 79-106.
- 153. Wallerstein and Blakeslee, Second Chances, pp. 297-307.
- 154. Robert Bolgar, Hallie Zweig-Frank, and Joel Paris, "Childhood Antecedents of Interpersonal Problems in Young Adult Children of Divorce," Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, Vol. 34 (1995), pp. 143-150.
- 155. William G. Axinn and Arland Thornton, "The Influence of Parents' Marital Dissolutions on Children's Attitudes Toward Family Formation," Demography, Vol. 33 (1996), pp. 66-81.
- 156. Hetherington et al., "Long-Term Effects of Divorce and Remarriage on the Adjustment of Children," pp. 518-530, and Larson et al., The Costly Consequences of Divorce, p. 165, reviewing the findings of Kinnaird and Gerrard (1986).

to endorse premarital sex¹⁵⁸ and engage in early sexual intercourse outside of marriage. ¹⁵⁹ According to the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth, African–American girls are 42 percent less likely to have sexual intercourse before age 18 if their biological father is present at home. For Hispanic–American girls, the stepfather's presence increases the likelihood of sexual intercourse before age 18 by 72 percent. ¹⁶⁰ Furthermore, any sexual permissiveness on the part of divorced parents significantly increases permissive attitudes and behavior in both sons and daughters. ¹⁶¹ As with other family behaviors, children learn sexual permissiveness from their parents.

The rate of virginity among teenagers at all ages is highly correlated with the presence or absence of married parents. ¹⁶² Indeed, each change in family structure during adolescence (from married to divorced, from single to married, or from divorced to stepfamily) increases the risk of initia-

tion of sexual intercourse by one-third among the teenage children of these unions. ¹⁶³ In Britain, children of divorced parents are three times as likely to have a child out of wedlock, compared with children of intact married families. ¹⁶⁴

Following a divorce, most mothers have to work full-time; this combination of divorced and full-time working mothers leads to the highest levels of sexual activity 165 in teenage children and is significantly correlated with having multiple sexual partners after a teenager becomes an adult. 166

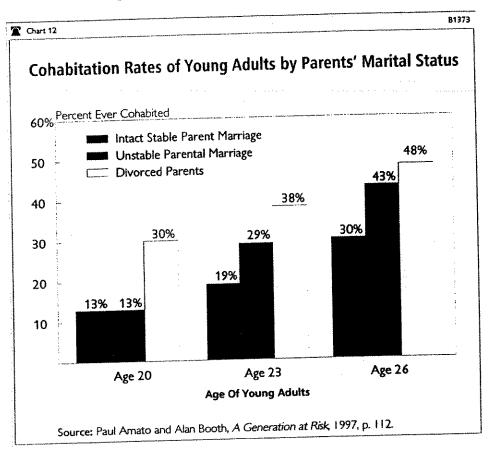
Leaving Home Earlier and Cohabiting More

The less happiness there is in their parents' marriage, the earlier children leave their parents' home to move out on their own, cohabit, or get married. ¹⁶⁷ Children of divorced parents move away from their families of origin in greater proportion ¹⁶⁸ and earlier ¹⁶⁹ than do children of intact

- 157. Kathleen Kiernan, "The Impact of Family Disruptions in Childhood on Transitions Made in Young Adult Life," Population Studies, Vol. 46 (1992), pp. 213–234.
- 158. Axinn and Thornton, "The Influence of Parents' Marital Dissolutions," pp. 66-81.
- 159. Arland Thornton, "The Influence of the Family on Premarital Sexual Attitudes and Behavior," *Demography*, Vol. 24, 1987, pp. 329–337. These findings hold regardless of ethnic background. See Carolyn A. Smith, "Factors Associated with Early Sexual Activity Among Urban Adolescents," *Social Work*, Vol. 42 (1997), pp. 334–346.
- 160. Robert Day, "The Transition to First Intercourse Among Racially and Culturally Diverse Youth," *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, Vol. 54 (1992), pp. 749–762.
- 161. Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs, To Have and To Hold, p. 36, reporting on the findings of Whitbeck, Simons, and Kao (1994).
- 162. Deborah M. Capaldi, Lynn Crosby, and Mike Stoolmiller, "Predicting the Timing of First Sexual Intercourse for At-Risk Adolescent Males," *Child Development*, Vol. 67 (1996), pp. 344–359, and recently found by Robert Lerner, consultant on national social surveys for The Heritage Foundation, in an unpublished analysis of the National Longitudinal Survey of Adolescent Health.
- 163. Brent C. Miller, "The Timing of Sexual Intercourse Among Adolescents: Family, Peer, and Other Antecedents," Youth and Society, Vol. 29 (1997), pp. 54–83.
- 164. Andrew J. Cherlin, Kathleen E. Kiernan, and P. Lindsay Chase-Lansdale, "Parental Divorce in Childhood and Demographic Outcomes in Young Adulthood," *Demography*, Vol. 32 (1995), pp. 299–316.
- 165. Larson et al., The Costly Consequences of Divorce, p. 131, reviewing the findings of John O. Billy et al. (1994).
- 166. Ibid., p. 131, reviewing the findings of Seidman, Mosher, and Aral (1994).
- 167. Powell and Parcel, "Effects of Family Structure on the Earnings Attainment Process," p. 421; Kathleen Kiernan, "Teenage Marriage and Marital Breakdown: A Longitudinal Study," *Population Studies*, Vol. 40 (1986), p. 35.
- 168. Cherlin et al., "Parental Divorce in Childhood and Demographic Outcomes in Young Adulthood," pp. 299-316.
- 169. Amato and Booth, A Generation at Risk, p. 69, reporting the consistent findings of Aquilino (1990, 1991); Goldscheider and Goldscheider (1989, 1993); and Cooney (1994).

marriages. Stepchildren are 40 percent more likely than children of intact marriages to leave home at any particular age to get married, and about 80 percent more likely to leave home early to cohabit or to set up their own independent residence. ¹⁷⁰

Children of divorced parents, as noted above, are more likely than children of alwaysmarried parents to have more positive attitudes toward cohabitation and more negative attitudes toward marriage. ¹⁷¹ (See Chart 12.) They are twice to three times as likely to cohabit and to cohabit earlier, ¹⁷² especially if their parents divorced during their teenage years. ¹⁷³



However, when children of an intact marriage have a poor relationship with a parent, they often act in ways that are quite similar to children of divorced parents. In one study, for example, almost all daughters of divorced parents anticipated cohabiting before marriage, regardless of the level of affection between them and their fathers; but among daughters of intact marriages, it was those who had poor relationships with their fathers who anticipated cohabiting. 174

Higher Probability of Divorce

From the empirical evidence, it is clear that, to a large degree, the marital instability of one generation is passed on to the next. There are different estimates for the probability of divorce for children of divorced parents. Some have found the risk to be more than twice the risk for children of intact families. 176

^{170.} Goldscheider and Goldscheider, "The Effects of Childhood Family Structure on Leaving and Returning Home," p. 752.

^{171.} Axinn and Thornton, "The Influence of Parents' Marital Dissolutions," pp. 66-81.

^{172.} Cherlin et al., "Parental Divorce in Childhood and Demographic Outcomes in Young Adulthood," pp. 299–316, and Amato and Booth, A Generation at Risk, p. 112.

^{173.} Amato and Booth, A Generation at Risk, p. 112.

^{174.} Suzanne Southworth and J. Conrad Schwarz, "Post-Divorce Contact, Relationship with Father, and Heterosexual Trust in Female College Students," American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, Vol. 57 (1987), pp. 379–381.

^{175.} Amato, "Explaining the Intergenerational Transmission of Divorce," p. 628, reviewing the findings of Bumpass, Martin, and Sweet (1991); Keith and Finlay (1988); Kulka and Weingarten (1979); Mueller and Pope (1977); Pope and Mueller (1976). See also Joan S. Tucker et al., "Parental Divorce: Effects on Individual Behavior and Longevity," Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, Vol. 73 (1997), pp. 385–386.

Daughters of divorced parents tend to divorce more frequently than do the sons of divorced parents, ¹⁷⁷ with the risk as much as 87 percent higher during the earlier years of marriage ¹⁷⁸ for daughters of divorced parents than for those from intact marriages. ¹⁷⁹ When the parents of both spouses have divorced, the risk of divorce is increased by as much as 620 percent in the early years of marriage, which declines to 20 percent by the 11th year of marriage. ¹⁸⁰

Given the effects of divorce as already enumerated, this lowered quality of marriage for children of divorce should not be surprising. ¹⁸¹ It is evidenced in higher levels of jealousy, moodiness, infidelity, conflicts over money, and excessive drinking and drug use. ¹⁸²

Conversely, the continued presence of a married father in the home strongly predicts the happy marriage of the child. A 35-year longitudinal study found that the children of affectionate fathers were much more likely in their forties to be happily

married and mentally healthy and to report good relationships with their friends. ¹⁸³ The child with a father present in the early and adolescent years is more companionable and responsible as an adult. ¹⁸⁴

HOW DIVORCE AFFECTS RELIGIOUS PRACTICE

When a family breaks apart, the rhythm of family life is deeply affected, and this often means that religious practice is disrupted. The diminished practice of religion, in turn, can have negative consequences.

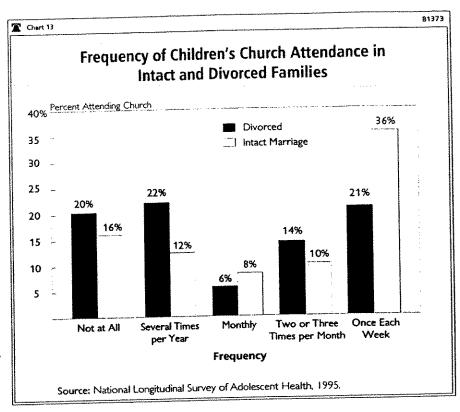
The data clearly show that parents and children in intact families are much more likely to worship than are members of divorced families or stepfamilies. ¹⁸⁵ Moreover, following a divorce, children are more likely to stop practicing their faith. ¹⁸⁶ Even when they enter a new stepfamily, their frequency of religious worship does not return to its prior level. ¹⁸⁷

- 176. Pamela S. Webster, Terri L. Orbuch, and James S. House, "Effects of Childhood Family Background on Adult Marital Quality and Perceived Stability," American Journal of Sociology, Vol. 101 (1995), pp. 404–432, and Amato and Booth, A Generation at Risk, p. 109, summing up the findings of Amato (1995); Bumpass, Martin, and Sweet (1991); Glen and Kramer (1987); Keith and Finlay (1988); Kulka and Weingarten (1979); Pope and Mueller (1976).
- 177. Norval D. Glenn and Kathryn B. Kramer, "The Marriages and Divorces of the Children of Divorce," Journal of Marriage and the Family, Vol. 49 (1987), pp. 811–825.
- 178. Amato "Explaining the Intergenerational Transmission of Divorce," p. 628.
- 179. According to Amato and Booth's research, the risk is highest when the divorce occurs before the child reaches age 13; the risk decreases significantly when the parents' divorce takes place in the child's teen years; finally, the divorce of parents when offspring are in their twenties may keep the offspring from divorcing their spouses later in life. See Amato, "Explaining the Intergenerational Transmission of Divorce," p. 638.

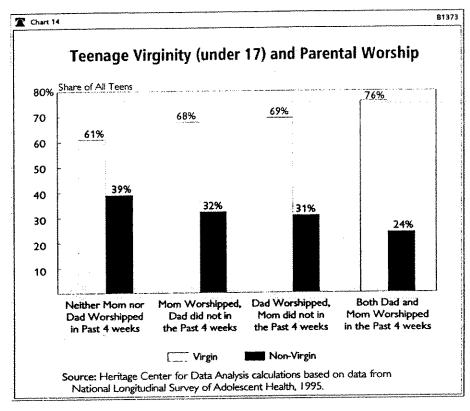
180. Ibid.

- 181. *Ibid.*, p. 109, reviewing the findings of Amato and Booth (1991); Glenn and Kramer (1987); Kulka and Weingarten (1979); McLeod (1991). This effect can also be found among children of unhappy intact marriages. See Alan Booth and John N. Edwards, "Transmission of Marital and Family Quality Over the Generations: The Effects of Parental Divorce and Unhappiness," *Journal of Divorce*, Vol. 13 (1990), pp. 41–58.
- 182. Paul R. Amato and Stacy Rogers, "A Longitudinal Study of Marital Problems and Subsequent Divorce," Journal of Marriage and the Family, Vol. 59 (1997), p. 621.
- 183. Carol E. Franz, David C. McClelland, and Joel Weinberger, "Childhood Antecedents of Conventional Social Accomplishments in Midlife Adults: A Thirty-Six Year Prospective Study," Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, Vol. 60 (1991), pp. 586–595.
- 184. John Snarey, How Fathers Care for the Next Generation (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993), pp. 163-164.
- 185. Scott M. Myers, "An Interactive Model of Religiosity Inheritance: The Importance of Family Context," American Sociological Review, Vol. 61 (1996), pp. 858–866.

This drop-off in worship has serious consequences because religious practice has been found to have beneficial effects on such factors as physical and mental health, education level, income, virginity, marital stability, crime, addiction, and general happiness. 188 Church attendance is the most significant predictor of marital stability; 189 it is closely related to sexual restraint in adolescence, 190 as is the worship of an adolescent's parents. 191 Regular religious worship, more than religious attitudes or affiliation, is associated with lower crime rates 192 and lower rates of use and abuse of alcohol and illicit drugs. 193 Religious worship is associated with better health¹⁹⁴ and longevity.¹⁹⁵ And religious worship reduces the risk of suicide, both in America and abroad. 196



- 186. A team of sociologists at Nassau Community College in New York developed a profile of former believers who had stopped practicing their religions. See William Feigelman, Bernard S. Gorman, and Joseph A. Varacalli, "Americans Who Give Up Religion," Sociology and Social Research, Vol. 76 (1992), pp. 138–143.
- 187. Myers, "An Interactive Model of Religiosity Inheritance," pp. 858-866.
- 188. Patrick F. Fagan, "Why Religion Matters: The Impact of Religious Practice on Social Stability," Heritage Foundation Backgrounder No. 1064, January 25, 1996.
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- 190. Michael J. Donahue, "Aggregate Religiousness and Teenage Fertility Revisited: Reanalysis of Data from the Guttmacher Institute," paper presented at Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, Chicago, Illinois, October 1988.
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- 193. Ibid. See also Steven R. Burkett and Mervin White, "Hellfire and Delinquency: Another Look," Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, Vol. 13 (1974), pp. 455–462; Deborah Hasin, Jean Endicott, and Collins Lewis, "Alcohol and Drug Abuse in Patients with Affective Syndrome," Comprehensive Psychiatry, Vol. 26 (1985), pp. 283–295.
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- 195. J. S. House, C. Robins, and H. L. Metzner, "The Association of Social Relationships and Activities with Mortality: Prospective Evidence from the Tecumseh Community Health Study," American Journal of Epidemiology, Vol. 114 (1984), p. 129.



Data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Adolescent Health, for example, illustrate well the effects of family members' religious worship in decreasing teenage sexual activity. (See Chart 13 and Chart 14.)

Thus, the negative consequences from a longterm decrease in religious worship after the divorce of a child's parents result in weakened families and individuals.

HOW TO REVERSE THESE TRENDS

As the available evidence shows, divorce is bad for society and very harmful for children. It weakens relationships, communities, cities, states, and the nation. The increases in the rates of child abuse and neglect, crime, behavioral and emotional problems, health problems, cohabitation, future divorce, and out-of-wedlock births as well as the decrease in religious worship, educational attainment, and income potential should alarm every policymaker and community leader. The effects of divorce transcend generations and contribute to the all-too-evident cycle of social decay.

Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan (D-NY) was right when he said that "Congress cannot legislate useful attitudes," 197 but this does not mean that politicians cannot work to change attitudes that undermine families and society. Many great politicians, from Augustus through Ronald Reagan,

have used the podium and the gavel to do exactly that. 198 But changing America's attitude toward divorce will require politicians and civic leaders at the federal, state, and local levels to make this one of their most important tasks in the future if America is to protect tomorrow's children from the effects of divorce.

Moreover, restoration of marriage will require a modest commitment of resources to pro-marriage programs. While fiscal conservatives may balk at this recommendation, they should consider that federal and state governments currently spend \$150 billion per year to subsidize and sustain single-parent families. By contrast, only \$150 million is spent to strengthen marriage.

^{196.} Charles E. Joubert, "Religious Nonaffiliation in Relation to Suicide, Murder, Rape, and Illegitimacy, Psychological Reports, Vol. 75 (1994), p. 10. See also Jon W. Hoelter, "Religiosity, Fear of Death and Suicide Acceptability," Suicide and Life Threatening Behavior, Vol. 9 (1979), pp. 163–172.

^{197.} Congressional Record, December 21, 1995, p. 291.

^{198.} Other national leaders are beginning to address marriage stability. Australia, under the leadership of Prime Minister John Howard, is implementing a program to fund private-sector pre-marriage education projects. See http://search.aph.gov.au/search/ParlInfo.ASP?action=view&item=1&resultsID=iOIEh. Britain, under Prime Minister Tony Blair, is moving in a similar direction.

Thus, for every \$1,000 spent to deal with the effects of family disintegration, only \$1 is spent to prevent that disintegration. The folly of such misplaced priorities should be evident to all. Refocusing funds to preserve marriage by reducing divorce and illegitimacy will not only be good for children and society, but will save money in the long run as well.

What Congress Should Do

Specifically, Congress should:

- Establish, by resolution, a national goal of reducing divorce among families with children by one-third over the next decade. Setting such a goal would immediately focus national attention on the severe problems related to divorce. It would send a clear signal to parents that society values marriage and is concerned about the effects of divorce on children. In addition, setting a national goal would help to channel resources into divorce prevention and foster new approaches to strengthening marriage. Reducing the divorce rate by one-third would roll back the rate of divorce to roughly the level that existed in the early 1970s.
- Establish pro-marriage demonstration programs. The federal government should divert sufficient funds from existing federal social programs to establish a wide range of demonstration programs to provide training in marriage skills. Such programs should provide young people, dating couples, and married couples with the information and tools necessary to help them build and maintain a strong marriage, including an understanding of the major reasons why marriages break up. The programs also should seek to develop skills for handling conflict, dealing with change, and enhancing the marital relationship. Such promarriage services should be offered in a variety of venues, such as churches, community centers, courts, maternity and childbirth clinics, health centers, welfare offices, military bases, and high schools. Control over the programs

should be given to pro-family community groups with historic commitments to traditional marriage rather than to indifferent government bureaucracies.

- Use surplus welfare funds to strengthen marriage. In 1996, the federal government reformed welfare, replacing the old AFDC program with a new program called Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF). A principal goal of this reform was to strengthen marriage and slow the increase in family disintegration. Yet despite Congress's formal promarriage goals in enacting these changes, and despite the fact that state governments now have nearly \$6 billion in surplus TANF funds, virtually no TANF money has been spent on pro-marriage activities. Congress should require that a certain percentage of TANF funds be devoted to efforts to reduce divorce and illegitimacy.
- Rebuild the federal-state system for gathering statistics on marriage and divorce. Since 1993, the gathering of accurate data on divorce has stopped; and in 1995, the Clinton Administration ended federal support for this system. The gathering of data on marriage and divorce ceased with a little-noticed announcement that "NCHS [the National Center for Health Statistics] plans to discontinue payments to the States and other vital registration areas for the collection of detailed data from marriage and divorce certificates." 199 Half the states no longer compile data from marriage registries and divorce courts. Without such data, the nation cannot assess the true impact of marriage or divorce on the family, the schools, the community, and the taxpayer. Congress has an opportunity not only to reverse this knowledge vacuum, but also to establish the template for collecting such data in the future. Using the same data template at the local levels would make the gathering and compilation of the data simple and fast at the state and national levels.

^{199.} From data at http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/datawh/datasite/frnotice.htm (March 27, 2000).

- Direct the National Institute on Drug Abuse to estimate the direct and indirect costs to the nation since 1970 of the increase in drug and alcohol abuse among divorced parents and their children.
- Create a public health campaign to inform Americans of the health and other risks associated with divorce and the long-term benefits of marriage. Such a campaign would fit well within the Department of Health and Human Services' Goals 2000 program.
- Host a National Marriage Summit in conjunction with governors who are leading in this area. Governors Frank Keating of Oklahoma, Mike Leavitt of Utah, Bill Owens of Colorado, Mike Huckabee of Arkansas, Jeb Bush of Florida, and Mike Foster of Louisiana have publicly voiced their interest in reforming marriage policy. The focus of the summit should be the next steps that should be taken to restore marriage to its rightful place as the center beam of this society.²⁰⁰
- Give a one-time tax credit to always-married couples when their youngest children reach age 18. Giving a one-time tax credit of, for example, \$500 to always-married parents would signal to Americans that an intact marriage is important and fundamental to the well-being of children and the nation. This would represent a small reward for those who commit their marriages to nurturing the next generation into adulthood, and it would begin to help offset the marriage penalty in the current tax code.

What States Can Do

Marriage and divorce are governed by state law. States should change their laws to reduce the impact of divorce on children. Specifically, they should:

 Establish a goal within each state to reduce the divorce rate among parents with children in

- the state by one-third over the next decade. As in the case of setting a national goal, establishing a similar goal in each state would focus attention on the problem of divorce, send a clear signal to parents that society values marriage, help to channel resources into divorce prevention, and foster new approaches to strengthening marriage.
- Establish pro-marriage education and mentoring programs. State governments should establish programs to provide young people, dating couples, and married couples with the information and tools necessary to build and maintain strong marriages. Offered in a variety of venues—churches, community centers, courts, maternity and childbirth clinics, health centers, welfare offices, and high schools-these programs should help couples develop skills for handling conflict, dealing with change, and enhancing the enjoyment and intimacy of the marital relationship. Control over the programs should be given to pro-family community groups with a historic commitment to marriage.
- Require a married couple with minor children to complete divorce education and a mediated co-partnering plan before filing for divorce. Divorce education can help couples resolve problems and save their marriage; however, it is most effective when undertaken in the initial stages of the divorce process. Similarly, many couples have an illusory view of divorce as a cost-free escape from their current problems. Requiring a co-partnering plan enables the couple to develop a more realistic picture of what life will be like after divorce and can serve as an impetus for the couple to make renewed efforts to save their current marriage.
- Promote community-wide marriage policies.
 Community-wide marriage policies provide premarital preparation and education programs for couples planning to get married, as well as marriage-mentoring programs for cou

^{200.} Australian Prime Minister John Howard has launched a National Families Strategy as part of the government's response to a major report by the Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee of the national parliament.

ples in troubled marriages. A Community Marriage Covenant is a community-wide endeavor in which all-or most-churches in the community agree to build and rebuild solid marriages in their community. They conduct marriage preparation programs, guide couples through the first years of marriage, and help couples thinking of divorce to avoid it with the support of other couples (including couples whose marriages were threatened by drug addiction, adultery, workaholism, gambling, violence, and depression) who once were in their shoes but learned how to rebuild their marriages. A well-executed Community Marriage Covenant project can save up to 80 percent of marriages headed toward divorce, reconcile more than half of the separated couples, and enable 80 percent of those in stepfamilies to become successful parents and partners. 201 Many cities that have undertaken a Community Marriage Covenant project have seen divorce rates plunge. 202 For instance, in Modesto, California, the divorce rate has fallen 35 percent in 10 years; in Kansas City, the rate dropped 35 percent in two years. Community Marriage Covenant projects are tangible, practical, and results-oriented.

End "no-fault" divorce 203 for parents with children under age 18. No-fault divorce is a meaningless term for children because of the damage divorce does. Some states (Arizona, California, Georgia, Kansas, Massachusetts, Montana, Virginia, Texas, and Washington) have introduced legislation to require mutual consent for a no-fault divorce. In the absence of such a provision, the spouse petitioning for a divorce has to prove the other spouse's "fault." The welfare of the children should be the

threshold for divorce. Married couples with children under 18 should have to prove that grave harm will be visited upon the children by the continuance of the marriage. Judges who were petitioners in their own divorces should be prohibited by law from presiding over divorce cases.

- Make the Covenant Marriage option available to couples who seek to marry. In a Covenant Marriage, couples are bound by force of law to a marriage contract that lengthens the process for obtaining a divorce by two years, thus applying a brake on the divorce. Louisiana and Arizona have enacted Covenant Marriage laws, and three other states (Oklahoma, Oregon, and Texas) have come close. In approximately 25 states, such legislation has been introduced but has not progressed through the legislative process. Other states propose improvements on the concept. 204
- Make the traditional marriage vow of "till death us do part" an option in the law. Couples who choose this option would commit themselves to remaining married until death, with legal separation as their only option if their marriage had serious problems. The effect of such a legal commitment would be salutary: The law is a great teacher, and this legal emphasis on the seriousness of the marriage commitment would encourage the ideal of marriage in society. Couples would undergo serious preparation before making such a commitment, knowing that it carried the force of law. This would make for stronger marriages, since many individuals today get married with the intention of staying married until death but find out over time that their spouse had no

^{201.} See http://www.marriagesavers.org/divorcerates.htm (March 27, 2000).

^{202.} Ibid.

^{203.} In "no-fault" divorce, either partner can end the marriage simply by petitioning for the divorce. This "reform" was introduced on the grounds that assigning "fault" caused greater hostility and division in the divorce proceedings. Even some feminists had pushed for no-fault divorce.

^{204.} The Catholic Church's hierarchy, once opposed to Covenant Marriage laws, has withdrawn objections to an improved version. From personal communication with the author of the original and the revised versions, Katherine Spaht of the Louisiana State University School of Law.

such intention. The law and government provide virtually no protections for such individuals or for the institution of marriage, and the legal loophole of no-fault divorce undermines the meaning of the marriage commitment.

- Follow the lead of Oklahoma, which uses Temporary Assistance to Needy Families funds to promote marriage among the poor. Because divorce and out-of-wedlock births are the major routes into poverty, it should stand to reason that encouraging, preparing, and maintaining marriage is sound public policy. To this end, Oklahoma Governor Keating has directed the State Secretary of Health and Human Services to spend \$10 million of the TANF funds to develop strategies to increase marriage, prevent divorce, and reduce out-of-wedlock births. Other states should follow this example.
- Take a page from the educational outreach strategy embodied in Florida's 1998 Marriage Preservation and Preparation Act. This bill requires marriage education skills classes for all high school students and offers a marriage license fee reduction to couples who take a minimum four-hour marriage education course.

CONCLUSION

Divorce has pervasive ill effects on children and the five major institutions of society—the family, the church, the school, the marketplace, and government itself. If the family is the building block of society, then marriage is the foundation. However, this foundation is growing weaker, with fewer adults entering into marriage, more adults leaving it in divorce, and more and more adults eschewing it altogether for single parenthood or cohabitation. ²⁰⁵

Given the prevalence of divorce, American children today are becoming weaker educationally, emotionally, and physically. Yet few are willing to point to divorce as a major contributor to these problems. Few policymakers like to dwell on the effects of divorce, but ignoring the problems will do little to change the culture of divorce.

To set about the task of rebuilding a culture of family based on marriage and providing it with all the protections and supports necessary to make intact marriages commonplace again, federal, state, and local officials must begin to talk about the problem and experiment to find sound strategies. America's forefathers had to rebuff threats from outside the nation. Today's generations are called to counter threats to America from within. What is required is the will to act.

—Patrick F. Fagan is William H. G. FitzGerald Senior Fellow in Family and Cultural Issues and Robert Rector is Senior Research Fellow in Domestic Policy Studies at The Heritage Foundation.

^{205.} Between 1960 and 1990, there was a 41 percent decline in marriage. The number of "never married" people rose from 21 million in 1970 to 46 million in 1996. Cohabitation increased from 430,000 in 1960 to 4.25 million in 1998, a tenfold increase. But as the social science literature also shows, cohabitation is linked to a serious rise in divorce: Those who cohabit before marriage divorce at twice the rate of those who do not. Also, 40 percent of cohabitors break up before marrying; and these former cohabitors, when they do marry, divorce at twice the rate of those who marry their first cohabiting partner, or at about four times the rate of those who do not cohabit before marriage. See Larry L. Bumpass, "What's Happening to the Family? Interactions Between Demographic and Institutional Change," presidential address to the Population Association of America, Demography, Vol. 27, No. 4 (November 1990), pp. 483–498, and Janice S. Crouse, "Strengthening American Families: What Works and What Doesn't Work," World Congress of Families II, Geneva, November 1999, Figure 9.



GMU Session II: The Decline of Marriage

GMU Session IV:
Divorce & Children

READING ASSIGNMENT

Presented By:

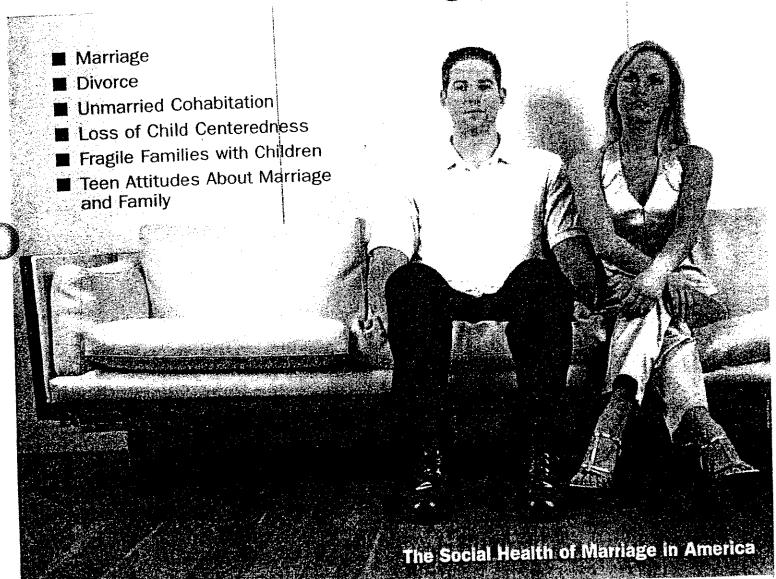
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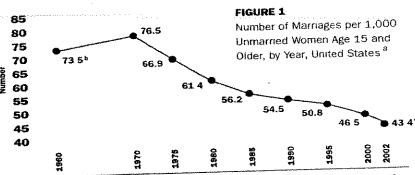
This conference session and speaker have been provided by the George Mason University Law & Economics Center. We gratefully acknowledge the assistance of the Law & Economics Center and, in particular, the assistance of Professor F.H. Buckley, Executive Director of the Center.

Social Indicators of Marital Health and Wellbeing Trends of the Past Four Decades

THE STATE of UNIONS







er age 15 and older rather than the Crude Marnage Rate cosmonal changes in the population that is changes which a We have used the number of marriages par 1 000 unmar of marriages per 1 000 population to help avoid the problet e ages. Even this more refined measure is some people in the name m merely from these being more or less to compressional dianges

Source US Department of the Census Statistical Abstract of the United States 2001 Page 87 Table 117 and Statistical Abstra t of the United States 1986 Page 79 Table 124

FIGURE 2 Percentage of All Persons Age 15 and Older Who Were Married, by Sex and Race, 1960 2003, United States a

		MALES			ì	
Year	Total	Blacks	Whites	Total	Blacks	Whites
1960	69 3	60.9	70.2	65 9	598	66 6
1970	66.7	56.9	68.0	61 9	54.1	62 8
1980	63.2	48.8	65.0	58.9	44.6	60.7
1990	60.7	45 1	62.8	56 9	40 2	59.1
2000	57 9	42.8	60.0	54.7	36 2	57.4
2003b	57.1	42.5	59.3	54 0	36.4	56.6
2000						

Includes races other than Black and White

Marriage

KEY FINDING: Marriage trends in recent decades indicate that Americans have become less likely to marry, and the most recent data show that the marmage rate in the United States continues to decline Of those who do marry, there has been a moderate drop since the 1970s in the percentage of couples who consider their marriages to be "very happy," but in the past decade this trend has swring in a positive direction

MERICANS HAVE BECOME LESS LIKELY TO MARRY $oldsymbol{A}$ This is reflected in a decline of more than 40 percent, from 1970 to 2002, in the annual number of marriages per 1000 unmarried adult women (Figure 1) Some of this decline-it is not clear just how muchresults from the delaying of first marriages until older ages the median age at first marnage went from 20 for females and 23 for males in 1960 to about 25 and 27, respectively, in recent years. Other factors accounting for the decline are the growth of unmarned cohabitation and a small decrease in the tendency of divorced persons to remarry

The decline also reflects some increase in lifelong singlehood, though the actual amount can not be known until current young and middle-aged adults pass through the life course

The percentage of adults in the population who are married has also diminished. Since 1960, the decline of those married among all persons age 15 and older has been twelve percentage points—and over 23 points among black females (Figure 2) It should be noted that these data include both people who have never married and those who have married and then divorced (For some economic implications of the decline of marriage, see the accompanying box "The Surpnsing Economic Benefits of Marriage *)

in order partially to control for a decline in married adults simply due to delayed first marriages, we have looked at changes in the percentage of persons age 35 through 44 who were marned (Figure 3) Since 1960, there has been a drop of almost 19 percentage points for married men and over 16 points for married women. A slight increase in the percentage of married people in this age group occurred beginning in 1999, for unknown reasons, but this increase now appears to have ended

Marriage trends in the age range of 35 to 44 are suggestive of lifelong singlehood in times past and still today, virtually all persons who were going to marry during their lifetimes had married by age 45. More than 90 percent of women have married eventually in every generation for which records exist, going back to the mid-1800s By 1960, 94 percent of women then alive had been married at least once by age 45—probably an

b Per 1 000 urmarned women age 14 and older

[•] Figure for 2002 was obtained using data from the Current Population Surveys: March 2002 Supplement, as well as Births.
• Figure for 2002 was obtained using data from the Current Population Surveys: March 2002 Supplement, as well as Births Marchages. Divorces end Deaths Provisional Data for October-December 2002. Reticolarly Visional Vital Statistics Report 51.10. June 17, Marchages. Divorces end Deaths, Provisional Provisi or http://www.bis.census.gov.80/cps/Bds/2002/ssampwgt.html

b in 2003 the U.S. Census Bureau expanded its racral categories to permit respondents to identify themselves as belonging to more than one race. This means that racral data computations beginning in 2003 may not be strictly comparable to those of to more than one race. This means that racral data computations beginning in 2003 may not be strictly comparable to those of the more than one race. Source, U.S. Bureau of the Census. Current Population Reports. Senies P20-506. America's Families and Living Province Source, U.S. Bureau of the Census Current lables (www.census.gov/population/socidemo/hh fam/rabMS1-1 pdf). nd data calculated from the Current Population Surveys March 2003 Supp

THE SURPRISING ECONOMIC BENEFITS OF MARRIAGE

hen thinking of the many benefits of marriage, the economic aspects are often overlooked. Yet the economic benefits of marriage are substantial, both for individuals and for society as a whole. Marriage is a wealth generating institution. Married couples create more economic assets on average than do otherwise similar singles or cohabiting couples. A 1992 study of retirement data concluded that "individuals who are not continuously married have significantly lower wealth than those who remain married throughout their lives." Compared to those continuously married, those who never married have a reduction in wealth of 75% and those who divorced and didn't remarry have a reduction of 73%.

One might think that the explanation for why marriage generates economic assets is because those people who are more likely to be wealth creators are also more likely to marry and stay married. And this is certainly true, but only in part. The institution of marriage itself provides a wealth-generation bonus. It does this through providing economies of scale (two can live more cheaply than one), and as implicitly a long-term personal contract it encourages economic specialization. Working as a couple, individuals can develop those skills in which they excel, leaving others to their partner.

Also, married couples save and invest more for the future, and they can act as a small insurance pool against life uncertainties such as illness and job loss. Probably because of marital social norms that encourage healthy, productive behavior, men tend to become more conomically productive after marriage, they earn between 10 and 40 percent more than do single men with similar education and job histories. All of these benefits are independent of the fact that married couples receive more work-related and government-provided support, and also more help and support from their extended families. To sets of in-laws) and friends d

Beyond the economic advantages of marriage for the married couples themselves, marriage has a tremendous economic impact on society. It is a major contributor to family income levels and inequality. After more than doubling between 1947 and 1977, the growth of median family income has slowed over the past 20 years, increasing by just 9 6%. A big reason is that married couples, who fare better economically than their single counterparts, have been a rapidly decreasing proportion of total families. In this same 20 year period, and largely because of changes in family structure, family income inequality has increased significantly.

Research has shown consistently that both divorce and unmarried childbearing increase child poverty. In recent years the majority of

children who grow up outside of married families have experienced at least one year of dire poverty. According to one study, if family structure had not changed between 1960 and 1998, the black child poverty rate in 1998 would have been 28 4% rather than 45.6%, and the white child poverty rate would have been 11 4% rather than 15 4% s. The rise in child poverty, of course, generates significant public costs in health and welfare programs

Marriages that end in divorce also are very costly to the public. One researcher determined that a single divorce costs state and federal governments about \$30,000, based on such things as the higher use of food stamps and public housing as well as increased bankruptcies and juvenile delinquency. The nation's 10.4 million divorces in 2002 are estimated to have cost the taxpayers more than \$30 billion.

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- b David Schramm, "The Costly Consequences of Divorce in Utah. The Impact on Couples, Community, and Government," Logan, UT: Utah State University 2003 Unpublished preliminary report

historical high point ¹ For the generation of 1995 assuming a continuation of their cur-

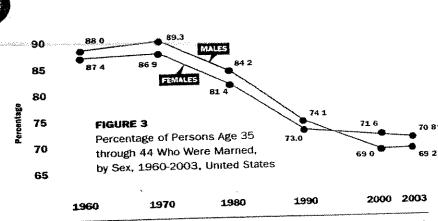
rent marriage rates several demographers projected that 88 percent of women and 82 percent of men would ever marry ² If and



Andrew J Cherlin Marriage Divorce, and Remarriage (Cambridge MA Harvard University Press 1992) 10 Michael R Haines, Long-Term Marriage Patterns in the United States from Colonial Times to the Present The History of the Family 1-1 (1996) 15-39

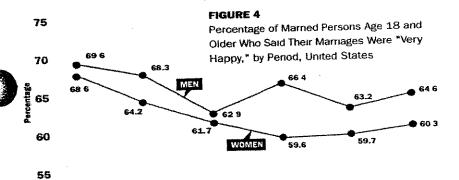
² Robert Schoen and Nicola Standish, The Retrenchment of Marriage Results from Marital Status Life Tables for the United States, 1995 Population and Development Review 27-3 (2001) 553-563

THE STATE ON SOLUTIONS 2004



Source U.S. Bureau of the Census. Statistical Abstract of the United States. 1961. Page 34. Table 27. Statistical Abstract of the United States. 1981. Page 38, Table 49, and U.S. Bureau of the United States. 1981. Page 38, Table 49, and U.S. Bureau of the Census. General Population Characteristics. 1990. Page 45. Table 34, and Statistical Abstract of the United States. 2001. Page 48. Table 51, internet tables two census, gov/populations/sociems/rin tam/cps.2002/tabli.ali.pdf) and data calculated from the Current Population Surveys. March 2003. Supplement.

Figure for 2003 was obtained using data from the Current Population Surveys rather than data from the census. The CPS
 March Supplement is becard on a sample of the US population rather than an actual count such as those available from the decor paid census. See sampling and weighting notes at littp://www.bls.census.gov.80/cps/ads/2002/ssampwgt.htm



1973-1976 1977-1981 1982-1986 1987-1991 1993-1996 1998-2002

Source: The General Social Survey conducted by the Nabonal Opinion Research Center of the University of Chicago. Data are weighted by number of persons age 18 and older in the household. Trend is statistically significant (p< 01 on a two tailed test)

when these figures are recalculated for the early years of the 21st century, the percentage of women and men ever marrying will almost certainly be lower

It is important to note that the decline in marriage does not mean that people are giving up on living together with a sexual partner. On the contrary, with the incidence of unmarried cohabitation increasing rapidly, marriage is giving ground to unwed unions. Most people now live together before they marry for the first time. An even higher percentage of those divorced who subsequently remains live together first. And a growing number of persons, both young and old, are living together with no plans for eventual marriage.

There is a common belief that, although a smaller percentage of Americans are now marrying than was the case a few decades ago, those who marry have marriages of higher quality. It seems reasonable that if divorce removes poor marriages from the pool of married couples and cohabitation "trial marriages" deter some bad marriages from forming, the remaining marriages on average should be happier. The best available evidence on the topic, however, does not support these assumptions Since 1973, the General Social Survey periodically has asked representative samples of married Americans to rate their marnages as either "very happy," "pretty happy," or "not too happy"3 As Figure 4 indicates, the percentage of both men and women saying "very happy" has declined moderately over the past 25 years 4 This trend has shown a turnaround since reaching a low point in 1994, however, and is now heading in a positive direction

Divorce

KEY FINDING: The American divorce rate today is more than twice that of 1960, but has declined slightly since hitting the highest point in our history in the early 1980s. For the average couple marrying in recent years, the lifetime probability of divorce or separation remains close to 50 percent.

The increase in divorce, shown by the trend reported in Figure 5, probably has elicited more concern and discussion than any other family-related trend in the United States. Although the long-term trend in divorce has been upward since colonial times, the divorce rate was level for about two decades after.

- 3 Conducted by the National Opinion Research Center of the University of Chicago, this is a nation ally representative study of the English-speaking, non-institutionalized population of the United States age 18 and over
- 4 Using a different data set that compared marriages in 1980 with marriages in 1992, equated in terms of marital duration, Stacy J. Rogers and Paul Amato found similarly that the 1992 marriages had less marital interaction, more mantal conflict, and more mantal problems. "Is Marital Quality Declining? The Evidence from Two Generations." Social Forces 75 (1997). 1089.



YOUR CHANCES OF DIVORCE MAY BE MUCH LOWER THAN YOU THINK

y now almost everyone has heard that the national divorce rate is close to 50% of all marriages. This is true, but the rate must be interpreted with caution and several important caveats. For many people, the actual chances of divorce are far below 50/50. The background characteristics of people entering a marriage have major implications for their risk of divorce. Here are some percentage point decreases in the risk of divorce or separation during the first ten years of marriage, according to various personal and social factors*:

Factors	in Risk of Divorce
Annual income over \$50,000 (vs. under \$25,000)	30
Having a baby seven months or more after	1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1
marriage (vs. before marriage)	24
Marrying over 25 years of age (vs. under 18)	2
Own family of origin intact (vs. divorced parents).	
Religious affiliation (vs. none)	
Some college (vs. high-school dropout)	

So if you are a reasonably well-educated person with a decent income, come from an intact family and are religious, and marry after age twenty five without having a baby first, your chances of divorce are very low indeed.

Also, it should be realized that the "close to 50%" divorce rate refers to the percentage of marriages entered into during a particular year that are projected to end in divorce or separation before one spouse dies. Such projections assume that the divorce and death rates occurring that year will continue indefinitely into the future—an assumption that is useful more as an indicator of the instability of marriages in the recent past than as a predictor of future events. In fact, the divorce rate has been dropping; slowly, since reaching a peak around 1980, and the rate could be lower (or higher) in the future than it is today.

- Matthew D. Bramlett and William D. Mosher, Conabitation, Marriage, Divorce end Remarriage in the United States, National Center for Health Statistics, Vital and Health Statistics, 23 (22), 2002. The risks are calculated for women only.
- Rose M. Kreider and Jason M. Fields, "Number, Timing and Duration of Marriages and Divorces, 1996," Current Population Reports, P70-80, Washington, DC: US Census Bureau, 2002.

World War II during the period of high fertility known as the baby boom. By the middle of the 1960s, however, the incidence of divorce started to increase and it more than doubled over the next fifteen years to reach an historical high point in the early 1980s. Since then the divorce rate has modestly declined, a trend described by many experts as "leveling off at a high level." The decline apparently represents a slight increase in marital stability. Two probable reasons for this are an increase in the age at which people marry for the first time, and a higher educational level of those marrying, both of which are associated with greater marital stability.²

Although a majority of divorced persons eventually remarry, the growth of divorce has led to a steep increase in the percentage of all adults who are currently divorced (Figure 6). This percentage, which was only 1.8 percent for males and 2.6 percent for females

FIGURE 5 25 Number of Divorces per 1,000 23 Married Women Age 15 20.9 and Older, by Year, 21 **United States** 20.3 g 19 19.8 ž 17 15 13 11 9

We have used the number of divorces per 1,000 married women age 15 and older, rather than the Crude Divorce Rate of divorces per 1,000 population, to help avoid the problem of compositional changes in the population. Even this more refined measure is somewhat susceptible to compositional changes.

Source: Statistical Abstract of the United States: 2001. Page 87, Table 117; and National Vital Statistics Reports, August 22, 2001; California Current Population Survey Report: 2000, Table 3, March 2001; Statistical Abstract of the United States, 2002, Page 88, Table 111 and calculations by the National Marriage Project for the US less California, Indiana, Louisiana and Oklahoma using the Current Population Surveys, 2003.

in 1960, quadrupled by the year 2000. The percentage of divorced is higher for females than for males primarily because divorced men are more likely to remarry than divorced women. Also, among those who do remarry, men generally do so sooner than women.

Overall, the chances remain very high still close to 50 percent—that a marriage started in recent years will end in either

² Tim B. Heaton, "Factors Contributing to Increased Marital Stability in the United States," *Journal of Family Issues* 23 (2002): 392-409



Joshua R. Goldstein, "The Leveling of Divorce in the United States." *Demography* 36 (1999): 409-414

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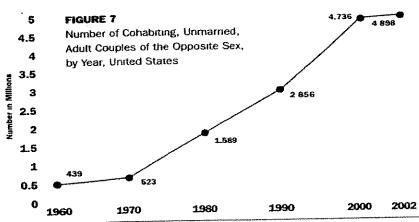
FIGURE 6

Percentage of All Persons Age 15 and Older Who Were Divorced, by Sex and Race, 1960-2003, United States

Year	Total	MALES Blacks	Whites	Total	FEMALES Blacks	Whites
1960	1.8	2.0	1.8	2.6	4.3	2.5
1970	2.2	3.1	2.1	3.5	4.4	3.4
1980	48	6.3	4 7	6.6	8.7	6.4
1990	6.8	8.1	6.8	8.9	11.2	86
2000	8.3	9.5	8 4	10.2	11.8	10.2
2003	8.3	8.7	8.4	10.9	12.8	10.9

Source* U.S. Bureau of the Census. Current Population Reports. Series P20-537; Mantal Status and Living Arrangements. March 2000 and earlier reports: and Current Population Survey. March 2003 supplement. raw data.

[•] In 2003 the U.S. Census Bureau expanded its racial categories to permit respondents to identify themselves as belonging to more than one race. This means that racial data computations beginning in 2003 may not be strictly comparable to those of prior years.



Source U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Reports, Senes P20 537, America's Families and Living Arrangements. March 2000 and Unimarried Couple Households, by Presence of Children. 1960 to Present, Table UC.1, June 12, 2003 (www.census.gov/population/socdemo/hh fam/tabUC-1 pdf) and earlier reports.

divorce or separation before one partner dies ³ (But see the accompanying box "Your Chances of Divorce May Be Much Lower Than You Think") The likelihood of divorce has varied considerably among different segments of the American population, being higher for

blacks than for whites, for instance, and higher in the West than in other parts of the country. But these variations have been diminishing. The trend toward a greater similarity of divorce rates between whites and blacks is largely attributable to the fact that fewer blacks are marrying 4 Divorce rates in the South and Midwest have come to resemble those in the West, for reasons that are not well understood, leaving only the Eastern Seaboard and the Central Plains with significantly lower divorce.

At the same time, there has been little change in such traditionally large divorce rate differences as between those who marry when they are teenagers compared to those who marry after age 21, high-school drop outs versus college graduates, and the non-religious compared to the religiously committed Teenagers, high-school drop outs, and the non-religious who marry have considerably higher divorce rates 5

Unmarried Cohabitation

KEY FINDING: The number of unmarried couples has increased dramatically over the past four decades, and the increase is continuing. Most younger Americans now spend some time living together outside of marriage, and unmarried cohabitation commonly precedes marriage.

Between 1960 and 2002, as indicated in Figure 7, the number of unmarried couples in America increased by over 1100 percent. Unmarried cohabitation—the status of couples who are sexual partners, not married to each other, and sharing a household—is particularly common among the young. It is estimated that about a quarter of unmarried women age 25 to 39 are currently living with a partner and an additional quarter have lived with a partner at some time in the past. Over half of all first marriages are now pre-



³ Robert Schoen and Nicola Standish. The Retrenchment of Marriage Results from Marital Status Life Tables for the United States, 1995, Population and Development Review 27-3 (2001) 553 563. R. Kelly Raley and Larry Bumpass, The Topography of the Divorce Ptateau Levels and Trends in Union Stability in the United States after 1980, Demographic Research 8-8 (2003) 245-259.

⁵ Raley and Bumpass, 2003

Total Fertility Rate

3 654

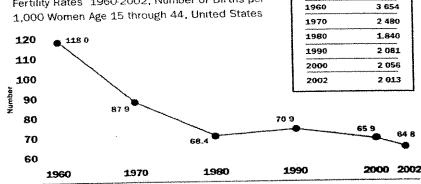
ceded by living together, compared to virtually none 50 years ago :

For many, cohabitation is a prelude to marriage, for others, simply an alternative to living alone, and for a small but growing number it is considered an alternative to marriage Cohabitation is more common among those of lower educational and income levels Recent data show that among women in the 19 to 44 age range 60 percent of high school dropouts have cohabited compared to 37 percent of college graduates 2 Cohabitation is also more common among those who are less religious than their peers those who have been divorced and those who have experienced parental divorce, fatherlessness, or high levels of marital discord during childhood. A growing percentage of cohabiting couple households now almost 40 percent, contain children

The belief that living together before marnage is a useful way "to find out whether you really get along, and thus avoid a bad marnage and an eventual divorce, is now widespread among young people. But the available data on the effects of cohabitation fail to confirm this belief in fact, a substantial body of evidence indicates that those who live together before marriage are more likely to break up after marnage. This evidence is controversial, however, because it is difficult to distinguish the "selection effect" from the "experience of cohabitation effect." The selection effect refers to the fact that people who cohabit before marriage have different characteristics from those who do not, and it may be these characteristics, and not the experience of cohabitation, that leads to marital instability There is some empirical support for both positions. Also, a recent study based on a nationally-representative sample of women concluded that premarital cohabitation (and premantal sex), when limited to a woman's future husband, is not associated with an elevated risk of mantal disruption 3 What can be said for certain is that no evi-



Fertility Rates 1960-2002, Number of Births per



^a The number of births that an average woman would have if, at each year of age, she experienced the birth rares occurring in the specified year. A total fertility rate of 2.110 represents "replacement level" fertility. under current mortality conditions (assuming no net migration)

National Vital Statistics Report, 1993, Pages 1 2, 10 and 11 National Vital Statistics Report Source National Vital Statistics Report 1999, Pages 75, 1999, 1999, Pages 75, Reports, 52 10 December 17 2003 p 2 and 6

dence has yet been found that those who cohabit before marriage have stronger marnages than those who do not 4

Loss of Child Centeredness

KEY FINDING: The presence of children in America has declined significantly since 1960, as measured by fertility rates and the percentage of households with children Other indicators suggest that this decline has reduced the child centeredness of our nation and contributed to the weakening of the institution of marriage

THPOUGHOUT HISTORY MARRIAGE HAS FIRST AND foremost been an institution for procreation and raising children. It has provided the



¹ Larry Bumpass and Hsien Hen Lu. Trends in Cohabitation and Implications for Children's Family Contexts in the U.S. Population Studies 54 (2000) 29-41

² Bumpass and Lu 2000

³ Jay Teachman Premantal Sex Premantal Cohabitation and the Risk of Subsequent Marital Disruption among Women, Journal of Marriage and the Family 65 (2003) 444-455

⁴ For a full review of the research on cohabitation see Pamela J Smock Cohabitation in the United States Annual Review of Sociology 26 (2000) and David Popenoe and Barbara Dafoe Whitehead Should We Live Together? What Young Adults Need to know About Cohebitation Before Marnage—4 Comprehensive Review of Recent Research 2nd Edition (New Brumswick NJ. The National Marnage Project Rutgers University 2002)

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WHAT'S HAPPENING TO CHILD-REARING FAMILIES?

cholars are now widely in agreement that the best family situation for children and adolescents is to live with married parents who have a good marriage. Unfortunately, the percentage of childrening families with these characteristics has dropped dramatically in recent decades. In the 1973-1976 period, 51% of children under the age of eighteen were living with married adults in a marriage the reporting spouse rated as "very happy." By the 1997-2002 period, that percentage had dropped to 37% a This negative change is the result of two trends fewer children living in families headed by married couples, and a drop over time in the marrial happiness of those couples (See Figures 11 and 4 in this report.)

Several reasons for this deterioration in children's family situation are especially worrisome. One is that Americans increasingly view marriage and child rearing as separate pursuits. Take, for example, agreement among never-married young people ages 18-34 with the statement "those who want children should get married." In national surveys, 64% of the males in this category agreed in 1988, but only 51% did so in 2002. For females the drop was slightly steeper, from 56% to 42% homeover, in our annual reporting of the family life opinions of American high school seniors, the greatest increase this year was in regard to the statement "having a child without being married is experimenting with a worthwhile lifestyle and not affecting anyone else." Fifty-six percent of senior boys now agree with this statement, up from 49% in the late 1990s and curriently dead even with the percentage of senior girls who agree. (See Figure 17.)

A second reason for children's deteriorating family situation is that children seem to be a growing impediment for the happiness of marriages. Many studies have shown that the arrival of the first baby commonly has the effect of pushing the mother and father apart, bringing stress to the marriage. One recent review of over 100 research studies found that parents report significantly lower marital satisfaction than nonparents. This is especially true for parents of infants. Only 38% of mothers of infants have high marital satisfaction, compared to 62% of childless women. Further, this review concluded that the effect of parenthood on marital happiness is more negative among younger birth cohorts and higher socioeconomic groups, signs that the negative effect may be on the increase d

- ² Calculation by Professor Norval Glenn, University of Texas, using data from the General Social Surveys conducted by the National Opinion Research Center, University of Chicago. Data are weighted by number of persons under age 18 in the household. The trends in pre-adults living with an unmarried person and in those living with married persons in a "very happy" marriage are statistically significant (p< 01 on a one-tailed test).</p>
- B General Social Surveys
- c Carolyn Pape Cowan and Philip A. Cowan, When Partners Become Parents The Big Life Change for Couples (New York Basic Books, 1992), Jay Belsky and John Kelly, The Transition to Parenthood (New York Dell, 1994)
- Jean M Twenge, W Kerth Campbell and Craig A Foster, "Parenthood and Marital Satisfaction A Meta-Analytic Review," Journal of Marriage and the Family 65 (August 2003) 574 583

cultural tie that seeks to hold the father to the mother-child bond. Yet in recent times, children increasingly have been pushed from center stage. (See accompanying box. What's Happening to Child-Rearing Families?*)

Americans on average have been having fewer children Figure 8 indicates the decline in fertility since 1960. It is important to note that fertility had been gradually declining throughout American history, reaching a low point in the Great Depression of the 1930s before suddenly accelerating with the babyboom generation starting in 1945 By 1960 the birth rate was back to where it had been in 1920, with the average woman having about three and one half children over the course of her life. Since 1960 the birth rate has mostly been down sharply, although it increased some in the 1980s and again in the late 1990s Part of the recent upswing can be explained, in part, by a higher birth rate among new immigrants

Since 2000 the birth rate has been continuing its downward trend in 2002 the lat-

est year for which we have complete information, the American "total fertility rate" (TFR) stood at 2 013, below the 1990 level and slightly above two children per woman. This rate is below the "replacement level" of 2.1, the level at which the population would be replaced through births alone, but is still one of the highest rates found in modern, industrialized societies. In most European and several Asian nations the total fertility rate has decreased to a level well below that of the United States, in some countries to only slightly more than one child per woman 1 Many observers believe that the United States birthrate will decline further in future decades to become more like that of Europe

The long-term decline of births has had a marked effect on the household makeup of





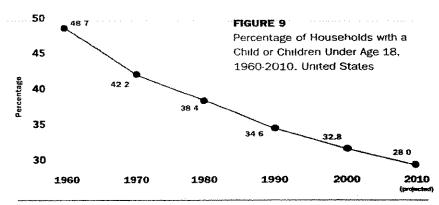
¹ The TFR in Spain, Italy and Greece is 1.2 in Germany, Japan and South Korea it is 1.3 World Population Data Sheet, (Washington DC Population Reference Bureau 2003)

the American population. It is estimated that in the middle of the 1800s more than 75 percent of all households contained children under the age of 18 2 One hundred years later in 1960, this number had dropped to slightly less than half of all households. In 2000 just four decades later, less than 33 percent of households included children, and the percentage is projected to drop to 28 by 2010 (Figure 9) This obviously means that adults are less likely to be living with children, that neighborhoods are less likely to contain children, and that children are less likely to be a consideration in daily life. It suggests that the needs and concerns of children-especially young children-gradually may be receding from our national consciousness

Several scholars determined that in 1960 the proportion of one's life spent living with a spouse and children was 62 percent, the highest in our history. By that year the death rate had plummeted so that fewer marriages ended through death, and the divorce revolution of recent decades had not yet begun, so that a relatively small number of marriages ended in divorce By 1985 however, just 25 years later, the proportion of one's life spent with spouse and children dropped to 43 percent-which was the lowest in our history 3 This remarkable reversal was caused mainly by the decline of fertility and the weakening of marriage through divorce and unwed births

In a recent cross-national comparison of industrialized nations, the United States ranked virtually at the top in the percentage disagreeing with this statement "the main purpose of marriage is having children "4 Nearly 70 percent of Americans believe the main purpose of marriage is something else compared, for example to just 51 percent of

University_1990) Figure 22 4 p 588



Source Calculated from data in U.S. Bureau of the Census. Statistical Abstract of the United States. 1976. Page 40, Table 53, Statistical Abstract of the United States 1981 Page 46, Tables 66 and 67 and Statistical Abstract of the United States 2001. Page 50 Table 56, Projections of the Number of Households and Families in the United States 1995 to 2010 Current Population Reports, Series P25-1129

Norwegians or 45 percent of Italians Consistent with this view is a dramatic change in our attitudes about holding marnages together for children In a Detroit area sample of women, the proportion of women answering "no" to the question "Should a couple stay together for the sake of the children?" jumped from 51 percent to 82 percent between 1962 and 1985 5 A nationallyrepresentative 1994 sample found only 15 percent of the population agreeing that "When there are children in the family, parents should stay together even if they don't get along "6

One effect of the weakening of child centeredness is clear. A careful analysis of divorce statistics shows that, beginning around 1975, the presence of children in a marriage has become only a very minor inhibitor of divorce (slightly more so when the child is male than female) 7





² James S Coleman Foundations of Social Theory (Cambridge MA Belknap Press of Harvard

³ Susan Cotts Watkins Jane A. Meriken and John Bongaarts Demographic Foundations of Family Change American Sociological Review 52 (1987) 346-358

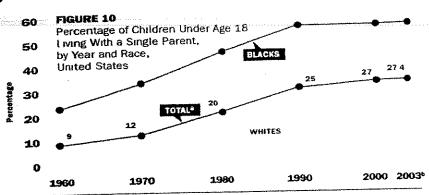
Tom W Smith The Emerging 21st Century American Family GSS Social Change Report 42 National Opinion Research Center University of Chicago 1999 Table 20 48

⁵ Arland Thornton Changing Attitudes Toward Family Issues in the United States, Journal of Marriage and the Family 53 (1989) 873 893. This change occurred among women as they grew older but it is very unlikely to be just an age effect

^{6.} The General Social Survey, conducted by the National Opinion Research Center University of Chicago

Tim B Heaton Marital Stability Throughout the Child Rearing Years Demography 27 (1990) 55-63. Philip Morgan Diane Lye and Gretchen Condran Sons Daughters and the Risk of Marital Disruption: American Journal of Sociology 94 (1988) 110-129 Linda Waite and Lee A Lillard Children and Marital Disruption - American Journal of Sociology 96 (1991) 930-953

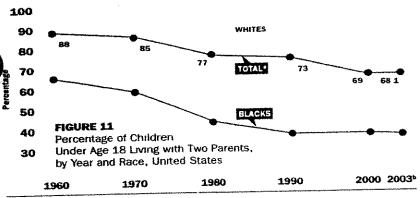
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a Total includes Blacks, Whites and all other racial and ethnic groupings. Over these decades an additional 3 to 4 percent of children, not indicated in these figures, were classified as living with no parent.

Source, U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Reports, Series P20-537, Children's Living Arrangements and Characteristics March 2002, and earlier reports and calculations from the Current Population Survey March 2003 Supplement

is 2003, the U.S. Census Bureau expanded its racial categories to permit respondents to identify themselves as belonging to more than one race. This means that racial data computations beginning in 2003 may not be strictly comparable to those of prior years.



* Total includes Blacks, Whites and all other racial and ethnic groupings

Source U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Reports, Series P20 537, America's Families and Living Arrangements. March 2000, Children's Living Anangements and Characteristics. March 2002, and earlier reports and calculations from the Current Population Survey. March 2003 Supplement

b in 2003, the U.S. Census Bureau expanded its racial categories to permit respondents to identify themselves as belonging to more than one race. This means that racial data computations beginning in 2003 may not be strictly comparable to those of prior years.

Fragile Families with Children

KEY FINDING: The percentage of children who grow up in fragile—typically fatherless—families has grown enormously over the past jour decades. This is mainly due to increases in divorce, out-of-wedlock births, and unmarried cohabitation. The trend toward fragile families leveled off in the late 1990s, but the most recent data show a slight increase.

THERE IS NOW AMPLE EVIDENCE THAT STABLE AND satisfactory marriages are crucial for the

wellbeing of adults. Yet such marriages are even more important for the proper socialization and overall wellbeing of children. A central purpose of the institution of marriage is to ensure the responsible and long-term involvement of both biological parents in the difficult and time-consuming task of raising the next generation.

The trend toward single-parent families is probably the most important of the recent family trends that have affected children and adolescents (Figure 10) This is because the children in such families have negative life outcomes at two to three times the rate of children in married, two-parent families 1 While in 1960 only nine percent of all children lived in single-parent families, a figure that had changed little over the course of the 20th century, by 2003 the percentage had jumped to 27 percent. The overwhelming majority of single-parent families are motheronly, although the percentage of father-only families recently has grown to about 18 percent

An indirect indicator of fragile families is the percentage of persons under age 18 living with two parents. Since 1960 this percentage has declined substantially, by 20 percentage points (Figure 11). Unfortunately, this measure makes no distinction between natural and stepfamilies, it is estimated that some 88 percent of two-parent families consist of both biological parents, while nine percent are stepfamilies. The problem is that children in stepfamilies, according to a substantial and growing body of social science evidence, fare no better in life than children in single-parent families. Data on stepfamilies.

- Mary Parke, Are Marned Parents Really Better for Children? (Washington, DC, Center for Law and Social Policy, May 2003), and William J. Doherty, et al., Why Marnage Matters. Twenty-One Conclusions from the Social Sciences (New York. Institute for American Values, 2002).
- 2 Jason Fields, Living Arrangements of Children Fall, 1996, Current Population Reports, P70-74, Washington, DC U S Census Bureau, 2001
- 3 Susan L Brown Family Structure and Child Weil Being The Significance of Parental Cohabitation Journal of Marnage and the Family 66 (2004) 351-367 and more generally, David Popence, "The Evolution of Marriage and the Problem of Step-families, in A Booth and J Dunn (eds.) Stepfamilies Who Benefits? Who Does Not? (Hillsdale, NJ Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1994) 3-27



lies, therefore probably are more reasonably combined with single-parent than with biological two-parent families. An important indicator that helps to resolve this issue is the percentage of children who live apart from their biological fathers. That percentage has doubled since 1960 from 17 percent to 34 percent.

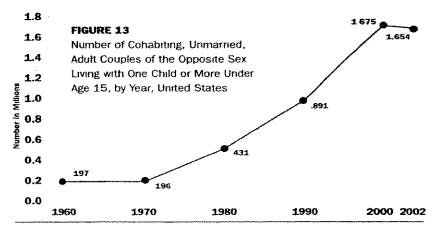
The dramatic shift in family structure indicated by these measures has been generated mainly by three burgeoning trends divorce, unmarried births, and unmarried cohabitation. The incidence of divorce began to increase rapidly during the 1960s. The number of children under age 18 newly affected by parental divorce each year most of whom have lost a resident father, went from under 500,000 in 1960 to well over a million in 1975 After peaking around 1980, the number leveled off and remains close to a million new children each year Much of the reason for the leveling off is a drop in average family size, each divorce that occurs today typically affects a smaller number of children than in earlier times

The second reason for the shift in family structure is an increase in the percentage of babies born to unwed mothers, which suddenly and unexpectedly began to increase rapidly in the 1970s. Since 1960, the percentage of babies born to unwed mothers has increased more than sixfold (Figure 12). More than a third of all births and more than two-thirds of black births in 2002, the latest year for which we have complete data, were out-of-wedlock. The percentage of black unwed births declined slightly in the late 1990s, but that decline now appears to have ended.

A third and still more recent family trend that has affected family structure is the rapid growth of unmarried cohabitation. Especially as cohabitation has become common among those previously married as well as the young and not-yet-married, there has been an 850 percent increase in the number of cohabiting couples who live with children (Figure 13). The small drop in that number between 2000 and 2002 is probably due merely to a slight decrease in the overall size of the cohabita-

a Total includes Whites. Blacks and all other racial and ethnic groupings.

Source Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1995, Page 77 Table 94, Statistical Abstract of the United States 1999 Page 79 Table 99, Statistical Abstract of the United States 2000, Page 69 Table 85 and Statistical Abstract of the United States 2001, Page 63 Table 76 National Vital Statistics Reports Vol 50 5 Martin J et al Births Final Date for 2002 National Vital Statistics Report 52 10 Dec 17, 2003 p 53



Source U.S. Bureau of the Census Current Population Reports. Series P.20.53". America's Families and Living Arrangements. March 2000 and Children's Living Arrangements and Characteristics. March 2002. Table U.C.1. Series P.20.547. (www.census.gov/population/socdemo/hh fam/tabl/C-1.pdf) and earlier reports.

tion-prone age groups. An estimated 40 percent of all children today are expected to spend some time in a cohabiting household during their growing up years 5.

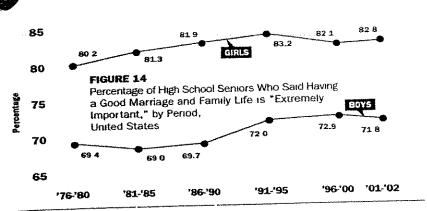
In 2000 about 40 percent of unmarriedcouple households included one or more children under age 18 ⁶ For unmarried couples in the 25 to 34 age group the percentage with children is higher still, approaching half of all

FIGURE 12 80 Percentage of Live Births that 70 Were to Unmarried Women by Year and Race, United States 60 50 40 30 20 10 0 1990 2000 2002 1960

⁵ Larry Bumpass and Hsien-Hen Lu Trends in Cohabitation and Implications for Children's Family Contexts in the U.S. Population Studies 54 (2000) 29-41

⁶ Tavia Simmons and Martin O Connell Marned Couple and Unmarned-Partner Households 2000 Census 2000 Special Reports CENSR-5 Washington DC US Census Bureau 2003

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Number of respondents for each sex for each period is about 6,000 except for 2001-2002, for which it is about 2,000

The trend for both boys and girls is statistically significant (p < 05 on a two tailed test)

Source Monitoring the Future Surveys conducted by the Survey Research Center at the University of Michigan

such households ⁷ Seventy percent of the children in unmarned-couple households are the children of only one partner ⁸ Indeed, if one includes cohabitation in the definition of stepfamily, almost one half of stepfamilies today would consist of a biological parent and unrelated cohabiting partner ⁹

Children who grow up with cohabiting couples tend to have worse life outcomes compared to those growing up with married couples ¹⁰ Prominent reasons are that cohabiting couples have a much higher breakup rate than married couples, a lower level of household income, and a higher level of child abuse and domestic violence. The proportion of cohabiting mothers who eventually marry the fathers of their children is declining, to 44 percent in 1997 from 57 percent a decade earlier—a decline sadly predictive of increased problems for children ¹¹

7 Wendy D Manning and Daniel T Lichter, "Parental Cohabitation and Children's Economic Well-Being, Journal of Marriage and the Family 58 (1996) 998-1010

- 8 Larry Bumpass, J. A. Sweet and A. Cherlin, The Role of Cohabitation in Declining Rates of Marnage," *Demography* 53 (1991) 913-27
- 9 Larry Bumpass, R. K. Raley, and J. A. Sweet, The Changing Character of Stepfamilies. Implications of Cohabitation and Nonmarital Childbearing, Demography 32 (1995) 425-436.
- 10 Susan L. Brown, op. cit., and Wendy Manning, The Implications of Cohabitation for Ghildren's Well-Being, pp. 121-152 in A. Booth and A. Crouter (eds.) Just Living Together (Mahwah, NJ Lawrence Erlbaum, 2002)
- 11 Bumpass and Lu, op cit

Teen Attitudes about Marriage and Family

KEY FINDING: The desire of teenagers of both sexes for "a good marriage and family life" has increased moderately over the past few decades. Boys are more than ten percentage points less desirous than girls, however, and they are also more pessimistic about the possibility of a long-term marriage. Both boys and girls have become more accepting of lifestyles that are alternatives to marriage, especially unwed childbearing, although the latest data show a slight drop in acceptance of premarital cohabitation.

To find our what the future may hold for marriage and family life it is important to determine what our nation's youth are saying and thinking, and how their views have changed over time. Are these products of the divorce revolution going to continue the family ways of their parents? Or might there be a cultural counterrevolution among the young that could lead to a reversal of current family trends?

Fortunately, since 1976 a nationally representative survey of high school seniors aptly titled Monitoring the Future, conducted annually by the Institute for Social Research at the University of Michigan, has asked numerous questions about family-related topics ¹

Based on this survey, the percentage of teenagers of both sexes who said that having a good marnage and family life was "extremely important" to them has increased slightly over the decades. Eighty-three percent of girls stated this belief in the latest period, with boys lagging behind at 72 percent (Figure 14).

Other data from the Monitoring the Future survey show a moderate increase in the percentage of teenage respondents who said that they expect to marry (or who are already married), recently 83 percent for girls and 78 percent for boys ² Among these teenagers,

The first survey was conducted in 1975, but because of changes in the ordering of the ques tions, the data from it are not comparable with the data from later surveys

² In the 1976-1980 period, 73% of boys and 82% of girls said they expected to marry (or were already

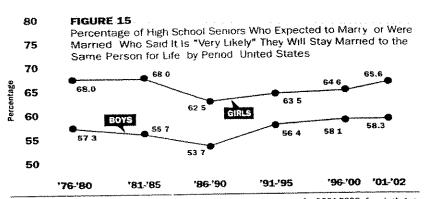
boys are somewhat more pessimistic than girls in the belief that their marriage will last a lifetime. Just 58 percent of boys and 66 percent of girls state that it is "very likely they will stay married to the same person for life although in the past decade the percentages for both sexes have been moving in a more optimistic direction (Figure 15)

At the same time there is widespread acceptance by teenagers of non-mantal lifestyles Take, for example, agreement with the proposition "that most people will have fuller and happier lives if they choose legal marriage rather than staying single or just living with someone" (Figure 16) Less than a third of the girls and only slightly more than a third of the boys seem to believe, based on their answer to this question, that marnage is more beneficial to individuals than the alternatives. Yet this belief is contrary to the available empirical evidence, which consistently indicates the substantial personal as well as social benefits of being marned compared to staying single or just living with someone 3

Witness the remarkable increase in recent decades in the acceptance of out-of-wedlock childbearing (Figure 17). And note that whereas in the 1970s girls tended to be more traditional than boys on this issue, the two sexes are now dead even following a sharp increase for boys in the most recent

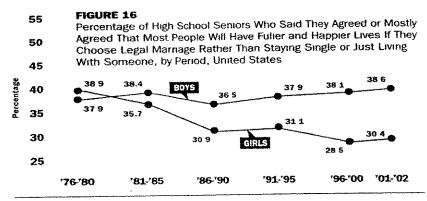
married) by the latest period, 2001-2002, the boys percentage jumped to 78 and the girls to 84 A 1992 Gallup poll of youth aged 13 to 17 found an even larger percentage who thought they would marry someday—88% compared to 9% who expected to stay single Gallup has undertaken a youth poll several times since 1977 and the proportion of youth expecting to marry someday has not varied much through the years. See Robert Bezilla ed America's Youth in the 1990s (Princeton, NJ The George H. Gallup International Institute, 1993)

3 For instance see Linda J Waite and Maggie Gallagher, The Case for Mamage (New York Doubleday, 2000), David G Myers, The American Paradox (New Haven CT Yale University Press, 2000), Steven Stack and J Ross Eshleman Marital Status and Happiness A 17-Nation Study, Journal of Marriage and the Family, 60 (1998) 527-536 and David Popenoe and Barbara Dafoe Whitehead Should We Live Together? What Young Adults Need to Know About Cohabitation Before Marriage 2nd Edition (New Brunswick NJ National Marriage Project Putgers University, 2002)



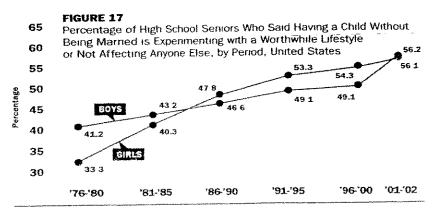
Number of respondents for each sex for each period is about 6,000 except for 2001 2002 for which it is about 2 000. The trend for girls is statistically significant (p < 01 on a two tailed test). The overall trend for boys is not significant, but the trend from the late 1970s to the late 1980s is significantly down (p < 01 on a two tailed test), and the trend from the late 1980s to 2001 2002 is significantly upward (p < 01 on a two-tailed test).

Source Monitoring the Future Surveys conducted by the Survey Research Center at the University of Michigan



Number of respondents for each sex for each period is about 6 000 except for 2001-2002, for which it is about 2,000. The trend for girls is statistically significant (p \sim 01 on a two tailed test)

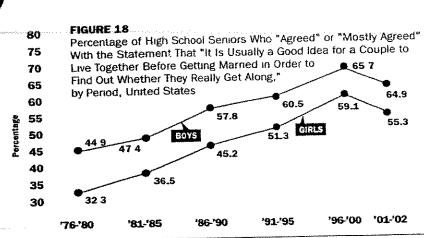
Source Monitoring the Future Surveys conducted by the Survey Research Center at the University of Michigan



Number of respondents for each sex for each period is about 6 000 except for 2001-2002 for which it is about 2 000.

The trend for both boys and girls is statistically significant (p = 01 on a two-tailed test). Source: Montroining the Future Surveys conducted by the Survey Research Center at the University of Michigan

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Number of respondents for each sex for each period is about 6,000 except for 2001-2002, for which it is about 2,000.

The trend for both boys and girls is statistically significent (p < 0.1 on a two tailed test).

Source Monitoring the Future Surveys conducted by the Survey Research Center at the University of Michigan

period With more than 50 percent of teenagers now accepting out-of-wedlock childbearing as a "worthwhile lifestyle," at least for others, they do not yet seem to grasp the enormous economic, social and personal costs of single parenthood

Another remarkable increase is in the acceptance of living together before marriage, now by well over half of all teenagers (Figure 18) in this case girls remain more traditional than boys. Yet this trend appears to have slowed in the past five years, especially among girls. This may be an indication that teenagers are more aware of the evidence, widely publicized in recent years, linking premarital cohabitation to a higher divorce risk.

In summary, marriage and family life remain very important goals for today's teenagers at the same time that they widely accept a range of non-marital lifestyles. There are no strong signs yet of a generational shift that could lead to a reversal of recent family trends, but some data from the recent period suggest that the views of teenagers are, with the exception of unwed childbearing, moving in a more conservative direction.

Are Married Parents Really Better for Children? What Research Says About the Effects of Family Structure on Child Well-Being

By Mary Parke

Introduction



ver the past four decades, the patterns of family structure have changed dramatically in the United

States. An increase in the numbers and proportion of children born outside of marriage and a rise in divorce rates have contributed to a three-fold increase in the proportion of children growing up in single-parent families since 1960. These changes have generated considerable public concern and controversy, particularly about the effects of these changes on the wellbeing of children. Over the past 20 years, a body of research has developed on how changes in patterns of family structure affect children. Most researchers now agree that together these studies support the notion that, on average, children do best when raised by their two married, biological1 parents who have low-conflict relationships.

This research has been cited as justification for recent public policy initiatives to promote and

About the Author

Mary Parke is a Policy Analyst at the Center for Law and Social Policy. strengthen marriages. However, findings from the research are often oversimplified, leading to exaggeration by proponents of marriage initiatives and to skepticism from critics. While the increased risks faced by children raised without both parents are certainly reason for concern, the majority of children in single-parent families grow up without serious problems. In addition, there continues to be debate about how much of the disadvantages to children are attributable to poverty versus family structure, as well as about whether it is marriage itself that makes a difference or the type of people who get married.

This policy brief summarizes the principal findings of this large and evolving body of research, discusses some of its complexities, and identifies issues that remain to be explored. It seeks to answer the following questions:

- How has family structure changed in the past several decades?
- Are children better off if they're raised by their married, biological parents?
- How do child outcomes vary among different family types?

ABOUT THIS BRIEF

The third in a series on Couples and Marriage Research and Policy, this brief summarizes the research on the effects of family structure on child well-being, tilscusses some of the complexities of the research, and identifies issues that remain to be suplored. The author thanks the following advisors who reviewed drafts of the brief. Paul Amato, Pannsylvania State University; Robert Lerman, Urban institute; Sara McLanghan, Princeton University; and Pamela Smock, University of Michigan.

This policy brief series is informed by a "Marriage-Plus" perspective, which has two main goals centered on the well-being of children: (1) to help more children grow up in healthy, married families and (2) when this isn't possible, to help parents—whether unmarried, separated, divorced, or remarried—cooperate better in raising their children.

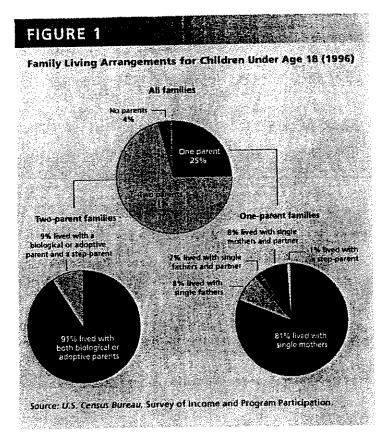
- What really makes the difference for children—income or family structure?
- Does marriage itself make a difference, or is it the kind of people who marry and stay married?
- Does the quality of the relationship matter more than marital status?
- What is the relationship between marriage and poverty?

How Has Family Structure Changed?

Single-parent families are much more common today than they were 40 years ago.2 Rates have increased across race and income groups, but single parenthood is more prevalent among African Americans and Hispanics. Twentytwo percent of African American children were living in a singleparent home in 1960; by 2001, the percentage had more than doubled to 53 percent. For whites, the percentage nearly tripled, from 7 percent to 19 percent, over the same time period. Three out of 10 Hispanic children lived in singleparent families in 2001.

In 1996, 71.5 million children under the age of 18 lived in the U.S. The large majority of these children were living with two parents, one-quarter lived with a single parent, and less than 4 percent lived with another relative or in foster care (see Figure 1). Two-thirds of children were living with two married, biological parents, and less than 2 percent with two cohabiting, biological parents. Less than 7 percent lived within a step-family. Twenty percent of children lived with a single mother, 2 percent with a single father, and almost 3 percent lived in an informal step-family that is, with a single parent and his or her partner.3

Family situations often change, which makes understanding the effects of family structure on children complicated. Many children live in more than one type of family during the course of their childhoods. For instance, the majority of children in step-families have also lived in a single-parent family at some point.



Are Children Better Off If They Grow Up With Their Married, Biological Parents?

In 1994, Sara McLanahan and Gary Sandefur, using evidence from four nationally representative data sets, compared the outcomes of children growing up with both biological parents, with single parents, and with step-parents. McLanahan and Sandefur found that children who did not live with both biological parents were roughly twice as likely to be poor, to have a birth outside of marriage, to have behavioral and psychological problems, and to not graduate from high school. Other studies have reported associations between family structure and child health outcomes. For example,

one study found children living in single-parent homes were more likely to experience health problems, such as accidents, injuries, and poisonings.

Of course, most children in singleparent families will not experience these negative outcomes. But what is the level and degree of risk for the average child? The answer depends on the outcome being assessed as well as other factors. For example, McLanahan and Sandefur reported that single-parent families had a much higher poverty rate (26 percent) than either two-parent biological families (5 percent) or step-families (9 percent). They also found that the risk of dropping out of high school for the average white child was substantially lower in a

two-parent biological family (11 percent) than in a single-parent family or step-family (28 percent).⁴ For the average African American child, the risk of dropping out of high school was 17 percent in a two-parent family versus 30 percent in a single- or step-parent family. And for the average Hispanic child, the risk of dropping out of school was 25 percent in a two-parent family and 49 percent in a single- or step-parent family.

Up to half of the higher risk for negative educational outcomes for children in single-parent families is due to living with a significantly reduced household income. Other major factors are related to disruptions in family structure, including turmoil a child experiences when parents separate and/or re-couple with a step-parent (including residential instability), weaker connections between the child and his or her non-custodial parent (usually the father), and weakened connections to resources outside of the immediate family-that is, other adults and institutions in the community that the non-custodial parent may have provided access to.

When controlling for other differences in family characteristics, such as race, level of parents' education, family size, and residential location, McLanahan and Sandefur found little difference in outcomes for children according to whether the single-parent families were a result of non-marital births or divorce. However, children of widowed parents do better than children of other types of single-parent families with similar characteristics.

How Do Child Outcomes Vary Among Types of Families?

Comparing two-parent families with all single-parent families often masks important subtleties. Subsequent research has added to our understanding of the range of family structures by examining separately the data for divorced, widowed, never-married, and cohabiting parents, married stepparents, and same-sex couples. While this research has revealed important nuances about the effects of these different family types on children, many questions remain unanswered. In addition, understanding the findings is complicated by the fact that studies do not use consistent definitions of family types or consistent comparison measures across data sets. And, as noted previously, children may experience more than one type of living arrangement over their childhoods. This section provides demographics on different types of families and discusses some research findings on various childhood outcomes.

Divorced families

Before they reach adulthood, nearly four out of 10 children will experience the divorce of their parents, and roughly one million children experience their parents' divorce every year. Research shows that, on average, children of divorced parents are disadvantaged compared to children of married parents in the area of educational achievement. Children of divorce are more than twice as likely to have serious social, emotional, or psychological problems as children of intact families—25 percent versus 10 percent.

Most divorced families with children experience enormous drops in income, which lessen somewhat over time but remain significant for years-unless there is a subsequent parental cohabitation or remarriage.5 Declines in income following divorce account for up to half the risk for children dropping out of high school, regardless of income prior to the divorce. The effects of divorce on children often last through adulthood. For instance, adult children of divorce are more likely to experience depression and their own divorces -as well as earn less income and achieve lower levels of educationcompared with adults whose parents remained married.

Widowed parents

Death of a spouse is a relatively uncommon cause for single parenthood today. More than 90 percent of children reach adulthood with both parents living. In 1998, only 3 percent of white children and 5 percent of black children were living with a widowed mother. Although death of a parent does put children at a disadvantage, children of widowed parents do the best of all categories of children of single parents. Children of widowed mothers are about half as likely to drop out of high school or have a teen birth as children of divorce or children born outside of marriage.

Never-married mothers

Childbirth and childrearing outside of marriage have become increasingly prevalent in the U.S. Among children living with single mothers, the proportion living with nevermarried mothers increased from 7 percent to 36 percent between 1970 and 1996. In 1996, 7.1 million children lived with a never-married

parent. Children of never-married mothers are at risk of experiencing negative outcomes and are among those most likely to live in poverty. Roughly 69 percent of children of never-married mothers are poor, compared to 45 percent of children brought up by divorced single mothers. Never-married mothers are significantly younger, have lower incomes, have fewer years of education, and are twice as likely to be unemployed as divorced mothers.6 While age of the mother has some effect, most of the differences between the two groups remain even when age is taken into account. Regardless of the mother's age at birth, a child born to an unmarried mother is less likely to complete high school than a child whose mother is married.

While we know the number of children born to never-married mothers, we don't really know how many spend their entire childhoods living with a mother who never marries or cohabits. Part of the increase in children living with never-married mothers is attributable to the increase in children born to cohabiting couples, which are often reported as single-mother families. Therefore, although these children are living with unmarried mothers, many may also have their fathers or other males in their households.

Cohabiting-parent families

The phenomenon of cohabitation—homes in which two adult partners of the opposite sex live together but are not married—has become much more common over the last 40 years. In 1970, there were 523,000 unmarried-couple households, while in 2000 4.9 million opposite-sex couples cohabited.

About 40 percent of cohabiting households in 2000 included children. While this equates to a small proportion of the total children in the U.S., the proportion of children who will live in a cohabiting household at some point during their childhoods is estimated to be four in 10. Cohabitation is more common among couples with low levels of education. Also, African American and Hispanic cohabiting households are roughly twice as likely as white cohabiting households to include children.7 However, while births within cohabiting unions have sharply increased for whites-accounting for almost all of the increase in non-marital births among white women-among black women, births to cohabiting couples account for less than one in five of non-marital births.8

Cohabitation takes place between a parent and his or her partner (creating an informal step-family) or the two biological parents of a child. Six out of 10 children in cohabiting-parent families live with an informal step-parent, while four out of 10 live with both biological parents. (In comparison, nine out of 10 children in married-couple households live with both biological parents.)

Research suggests that children in cohabiting families are at higher risk of poor outcomes compared to children of married parents partly because cohabiting families have fewer socioeconomic resources and partly because of unstable living situations. The average cohabiting union lasts about two years, with roughly half ending in marriage. Once married, formerly cohabiting parents have a much higher dissolution rate than couples who did not live together prior to marriage. One

study found that of children born to cohabitating parents who later marry, 15 percent will have their parents separate by the time they are one year old, half will not be living with both parents by age five, and two-thirds will not live with both parents by age 10. In comparison, 4 percent of children born into marital unions experience the break-up of their parents by age one, 15 percent by age five, and about one-third by age 10. Children living with cohabiting parentseven if the parents later marryare thus likely to experience considerable instability in their living situations. However, there is some evidence that cohabiting African American parents who marry may achieve the same level of stability for their children as African American couples who marry prior to having children.

Research suggests the importance of distinguishing between cohabiting families with two biological parents and those with a biological parent and another partner. Some evidence indicates that school achievement and behavioral problems are similar among children living with both biological parents—regardless of marital status—and that children in both formal and informal step-families also fare similarly in these areas.

Step-families

Roughly half of marriages are projected to end in divorce—60 percent of which have children—and many of these couples remarry. In 1996, about 7 percent of children, or five million children, lived with a step-parent, and estimates indicate that about one-third of all children today may live with step-parents before reaching adult-

hood. More than 90 percent of step-children live with their mother and a step-father. Step-families are at greater risk of dissolution than other marriages; about 60 percent of step-families are disrupted by divorce.

In spite of their better economic circumstances on average, children in step-families face many of the same risks as children of nevermarried or divorced parents. They are more likely to have negative behavioral, health, and educational outcomes, and they tend to leave home earlier than children who live with both married biological parents. However, the effect sizes are small for many of these differences, and risk levels may vary according to race and level of socioeconomic disadvantage. One study found that African American daughters in step-families were 92 percent less likely to have engaged in sex than African American daughters of single mothers. They were also less likely to become pregnant. Finally, children in stepfamilies are at increased risk for experiencing physical, emotional, and sexual abuse.

Same-sex couple families

The 2000 Census revealed that out of 5.5 million cohabiting couples, about 11 percent were same-sex couples—with slightly more male couples than female. One-third of female same-sex households and 22 percent of male households, or about 163,000 same-sex households in total, lived with children under 18 years old. (This compares with about 25 million married-couple households with children under 18.)

Although the research on these families has limitations, the findings

are consistent: children raised by same-sex parents are no more likely to exhibit poor outcomes than children raised by divorced heterosexual parents. 10 Since many children raised by gay or lesbian parents have undergone the divorce of their parents, researchers have considered the most appropriate comparison group to be children of heterosexual divorced parents. Children of gay or lesbian parents do not look different from their counterparts raised in heterosexual divorced families regarding school performance, behavior problems, emotional problems, early pregnancy, or difficulties finding employment. However, as previously indicated, children of divorce are at higher risk for many of these problems than children of married parents.

Does Family Structure or Reduced Income Make the Difference?

If the negative effects of single parenthood on child well-being were primarily due to a lack or loss of income, one would expect children living with two adults to do as well as those living with their married, biological parents. But this is not the case. The research shows that children living with two adults (i.e., with cohabiting parents or in a stepfamily) do not do as well as children living with married, biological parents on a number of variables.

Also, if income was the major factor behind the negative association between single parenthood and child outcomes, one would expect children of single-parent families who are not poor to have better outcomes than children of poor single-parent families. However, a recent study in Sweden—where the

safety net is stronger than in the U.S. and where the poverty rate among single mothers is very low—found problems for children of Swedish single-parent families similar to those found for children of American single-parent families.

Is It Marriage Itself or the Kind of People Who Marry (and Stay Married) That Makes the Difference?

It is often suggested that the positive effects of marriage on child well-being are likely derived not from marriage itself but from the distinctive characteristics of the individuals who marry and stay married (known as the "selection effect"). In many of the more recent studies, researchers have attempted to control for most of these selection effects through various statistical methods. For example, research on women with a first premarital pregnancy leading to a birth found those who had "shotgun" weddings (i.e., who married while they were pregnant) experienced a poverty rate of less than half of those who did not marry.11

There may be certain benefits to marriage, such as access to health insurance and tax advantages, that contribute to the increased likelihood of child well-being. In addition, it remains possible that those who marry also have attributes unmeasured in existing surveyssuch as commitment, loyalty, and future orientation—that distinguish them from those who don't marry and stay married. It is also possible that marriage itself-the actual act of getting married-changes the attitudes and behaviors of couples in positive ways, as well as those of others towards them.

Doesn't the Quality of the Relationship Matter More Than the Piece of Paper?

The quality of the relationship between parents matters to child well-being. Children who grow up in married families with high conflict experience lower emotional well-being than children who live in low-conflict families, and they may experience as many problems as children of divorced or nevermarried parents. Research indicates that marital conflict interferes with the quality of parenting. Furthermore, experiencing chronic conflict between married parents is inherently stressful for children, and children learn poor relationship skills from parents who aren't able to solve problems amicably. When parents have a highly discordant relationship, children are often better off in the long run if their parents divorce. Between 30 to 40 percent of divorces of couples with children are preceded by a period of chronic discord between the parents. In these situations, children do better when their parents divorce than if they stay married.

What Is the Relationship Between Marriage and Poverty?

Children living with single mothers are five times as likely to be poor as those in two-parent families. Some economists have attributed virtually all of the 25 percent increase in child poverty between 1970 and 1997 to the growth of single-parent families. But are single parents poor because they are not married, or would they have remained poor even if they married available partners? While it is difficult to disentangle the effects of income and

family structure, clearly the relationship operates in both directions: poverty is both cause and effect of single parenthood.

For example, research evidence indicates that in low-income, African American communities, the high rate of male unemployment is one of the factors that explains why low-income mothers do not marry. Serious and long-term financial stress can also wreak havoc on a marriage, and this may lead to marital breakup. Moreover, poverty and single parenthood reinforce each other. Growing up in an environment of poverty places a child at risk for not completing school, for becoming a teen parent, and for being unemployed, which are all characteristics that make it less likely that the child will eventually marry or that she or he will stay married.

But do low-income parents gain similar economic advantages from getting married as does the population as a whole? Recent economic simulation studies have found that if two poor unmarried parents marry they are less likely to be poor. Economist Robert Lerman found that married parents suffered less economic hardship than cohabiting parents with the same low income and education. Among the apparent explanations were that married parents are more likely to pool their earnings, husbands work longer hours and earn more, and married families receive more assistance from family, friends, and the community. While marriage itself will not lift a family out of poverty, it may reduce material hardship. However, marriage appears to be less of a protector against poverty for Hispanic families than for others.

What More Do We Need to Know?

Much remains to be learned about how living in different family structures affects child well-being, including:

- How does moving into and out of different family situations affect children? At what ages are children most vulnerable to these changes? How much of the risk to children is caused by living arrangement instability itself?
- What are the long-term effects of some of these family structure patterns—for example, for children who live in long-term cohabiting families or in longterm, single-parent, nevermarried families?
- How are children in families from different minority and cultural backgrounds affected by family structure?
- From a child well-being perspective, what are the relevant measures of a "healthy" or "good enough" marriage?

Conclusion

Research indicates that, on average, children who grow up in families with both their biological parents in a low-conflict marriage are better off in a number of ways than children who grow up in single-, stepor cohabiting-parent households. Compared to children who are raised by their married parents, children in other family types are more likely to achieve lower levels of education, to become teen parents, and to experience health, behavior, and mental health problems. And children in single- and cohabiting-parent families are more likely to be poor. This being said, most children not living with married, biological parents grow up without serious problems.

In individual situations, marriage may or may not make children better off, depending on whether the marriage is "healthy" and stable. Marriage may also be a proxy for other parental characteristics that are associated with relationship stability and positive child outcomes. The legal basis and public support involved in the institution of marriage help to create the most likely conditions for the development of factors that children need most to thrive-consistent, stable, loving attention from two parents who cooperate and who have sufficient resources and support from two extended families, two sets of friends, and society. Marriage is not a guarantee of these conditions, however, and these conditions exist in other family circumstances, but they are less likely to.

Endnotes

For an annotated version, with complete reference citations, visit www.clasp.org.

- I The reference to biological parents is to distinguish between biological/adoptive parents and step-parents. Most studies that include data on adoptive parents include them in the biological-parent category. Adopted children have very similar outcomes to children raised by both biological parents.
- 2 The number of U.S. children living with a single parent increased from 9 percent in 1960 to 27 percent in 2000.
- 3 While a number of children live in households with neither parent, this brief does not address children living with another relative or in foster care. For more information on the well-being of children living without either parent, visit www.urban.org and www.clasp.org, under child welfare.
- 4 Step- and single-parent families were grouped together.
- 5 Estimates suggest that children of divorce experience a 70 percent drop in their household income right after a divorce, and, unless there is a remarriage, the income is still 40 to 45 percent lower six years later than for children living in intact-family households.

- 6 59 percent versus 29 percent.
- 7 67 percent of African American, 70 percent of Hispanic, and 35 percent of white cohabiting households.
- In Europe, a very high proportion of out-of-wedlock child births are to cohabiting parents; in the U.S., less than

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half of non-marital births are to cohabitors.

- 9 There may be under-reporting by same-sex couples.
- 10 There is little information available about differences relating to socio-economic status, race, or other variables in same-sex couple families. Many of these studies have methodological limitations that apply to recruitment methods and small samples sizes. In addition, many samples of same-sex couple families have been largely of white, middle-class, well-educated families. Little research has been done on children born to or adopted and raised by lesbian or gay parents.
- 11 20 percent versus 47 percent.

Does Marriage Matter?*

Linda J. Waite

University of Chicago

The last several years have witnessed an active-sometimes acrimonious-debate, occasionally joined by demographers, over the state of the family. Some, like David Popenoe (1993), decry what they see as a dangerous erosion of the family as an institution, with dire consequences for society. Others, like Judith Stacey (1993), see the traditional family, balanced on the monogamous couple, as fundamentally incompatible with women's well-being. Although these two positions seem extreme, both have numerous adherents and

are held by serious scholars.

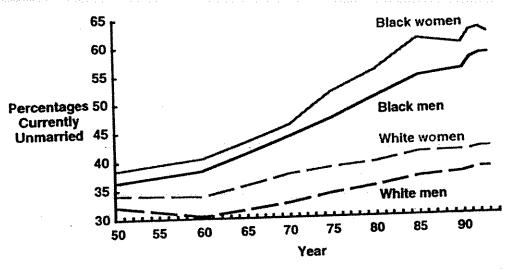
When politicians point to the high social costs and taxpayer burden imposed by disintegrating "family values," they overlook the fact that individuals do not simply make the decisions that lead to unwed parenthood, marriage, or divorce on the basis of what is good for society. They weigh the costs and benefits of each of these choices to themselves - and sometimes their children. But how much do individuals know about these costs and benefits? I think that we as demographers have something to contribute here. As individual researchers we investigate the relationship between marriage and longevity, wealth, earnings, or children's achievements, but we rarely try to pull all this evidence together. I would like to argue that we have an opportunity and an obligation to do that, and to tell people what their decisions about marriage and family potentially mean for them as individuals. That is my objective here.

Trends in Marriage and Cohabitation

Let us review, first, trends in marriage over the last four decades. Figure 1 shows the proportions of the adult population age 15 and over currently not married for the period 1950 through 1993, taken from decennial censuses and March Current Population Surveys. Although black men and women had higher proportions unmarried in 1950 than did white men and women, these differences were modest. Since that time, marriage patterns have diverged dramatically for the races. Figure 1 shows that the proportion of the population age 15 and older which is currently "unmarried" has increased for both whites and blacks, but with especially striking rises for blacks, so that in 1993, 61% of black women and 58% of black men were not married, compared with 38% of white men and 41% of white women. Insofar as marriage "matters," black men and women are much less likely than whites to share in the benefits, and much less likely today than a generation ago.

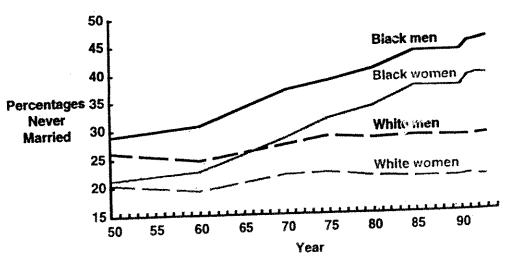
Figure 2 depicts the proportions of men and women age 15 and older who have never married for the period from 1950 to 1993. This figure shows that for blacks, much of the

^{*} I would like to acknowledge the generous assistance of Kermit Daniel, Kara Joyner, Lee Lillard, Stan Panis, Joyce Peterson, Becky Sandefur, and James Smith. Thanks to Sara McLanahan and Gary Sandefur and to Debra Umberson for permission to reproduce material from published papers.



SOURCE: U.S. Bureau of the Census (1953, 1961, 1971, 1975, 1981, 1986, 1991, 1992, 1993, 1994)
Figure 1. Percentages of the Population Age 15 and Older Not Currently Married, by Race and Sex

increase in current nonmarriage shown in Figure 1 occurred because of a dramatic rise in the proportion that has never married. In 1993, 46% of all adult black men and 39% of all black women had never married. For whites, we see very modest increases in the proportion never married; increases in marital disruption and declines in remarriage account for the rise in the proportion currently unmarried that we saw in Figure 1 for this group. Taken together, Figures 1 and 2 suggest that black men and women have led the retreat from marriage, becoming much more likely to avoid any contact whatever with the institution, whereas

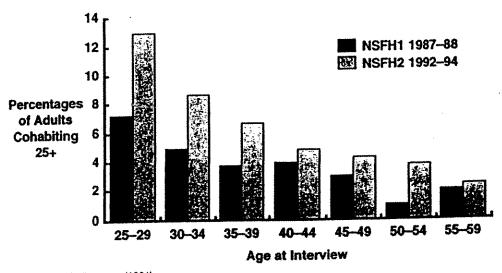


SOURCE: U.S. Bureau of the Census (1953, 1961, 1971, 1975, 1981, 1986, 1991, 1992, 1993, 1994)
Figure 2. Percentages of the Population of the Population Age 15 and Older Never Married, by Race and Sex

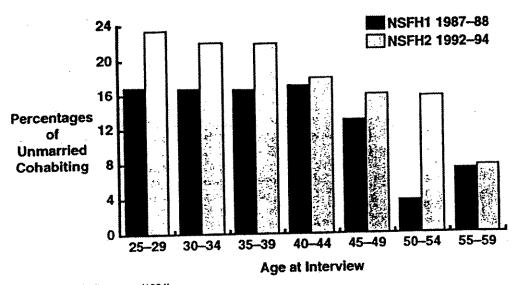
whites have continued to enter marriage but have left it in larger numbers than in the past and have become more hesitant to remarry after a separation or divorce (Smock 1990).

Cohabitation

Any discussion of marriage in American society today must address the issue of cohabitation. Figure 3 shows the percentages of adults who are currently cohabiting, as reported in the National Survey of Families and Households interviews conducted in 1987-1988 and 1992-1994. The NSFH is a probability sample of 13,017 individuals. representing the noninstitutional U.S. population age 19 and over and including an oversampling of minorities. The second wave of the NSFH, conducted in 1992-1994, includes inteviews with surviving members of the original sample, their current spouse or partner, selected children, previous spouse or partner, and parents (see Bumpass 1994). Although the interviews are only five years apart, we see substantial rises in cohabitation even in this relatively short period. In the late 1980s, about 7% of those 25 to 29 years old were living with someone in a "marriage-like" relationship. By the early 1990s this figure had risen to about 13%. We see similar increases, although at lower levels, for older individuals. Figure 3, however, also shows that the proportion of adults who currently live with someone is modest-never more than 13%, and quite low at older ages. Figure 4 shows the percentage currently living with someone among those eligible to do so-the unmarried. This figure shows that in the prime ages of union formation-ages 25 to 34-between 20 and 24% of unmarried adults are cohabiting. A good deal of recent research finds that cohabitations tend to be relatively short-lived; couples move rather quickly into either marriage or disruption of the partnership (Bumpass and Sweet 1989; Thornton 1988; Willis and Michael 1994), although recent cohabiting couples seem to be delaying their move to marriage (Bumpass 1994). Thus, although a sizable proportion of adults have cohabited, cohabitation appears to be a relatively short-lived stage in the life cycle for most.



SOURCE: Bumpass (1994)
Figure 3. Percentages of All Adults Currently Cohabiting, National Survey of Families and Households



SOURCE: Bumpass (1994)
Figure 4. Percentages of Unmarried Adults Currently Cohabiting, National Survey of Families and Households

Does It Matter?

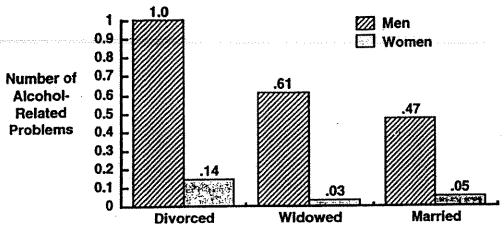
What are the implications, for individuals, of these increases in nonmarriage? If we think of marriage as an insurance policy—which it is, in some respects—does it matter if more people are uninsured or are insured with a term rather than a whole-life policy? I argue that it does matter, because marriage typically provides important and substantial benefits. In this paper I focus on benefits to individuals, although marriage also provides important benefits to society.

BENEFITS OF MARRIAGE

Healthy Behaviors

I present, first, evidence on the relationship between marital status and health-related behaviors. Figure 5 shows reports of problem drinking during the past year for divorced, widowed, and married men and women, taken from Umberson (1987). Problem drinking is measured by a scale that includes responses to the following three items on drinking during the past year: "... did you often end up drinking more than you planned to drink?"; "... did you fail to do some of the things you should have done because of drinking?"; "... have you thought, or has someone told you, that your drinking was probably hurting your health?" This figure shows two things: much lower rates of problem drinking for married than for unmarried men, and extremely low reports of this problem for women regardless of marital status. Recent evidence suggests that excessive drinking is a particularly male pattern of social pathology; for example, marital conflict is associated with problem drinking for men and with depression for women (Horwitz and White 1991; Robbins and Martin 1993; Waldron 1988).

Figure 6, however, shows reports of "risk-taking behavior." Risk taking is measured on a scale composed of five items: "I sometimes get careless and have accidents around the house, driving, on the job, etc."; "I sometimes take risks I shouldn't such as driving too fast

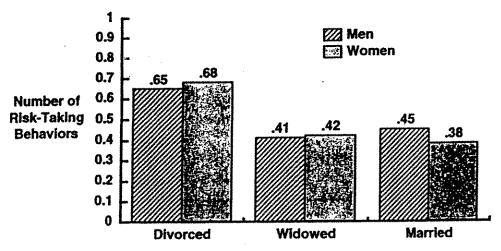


SOURCE: Umberson (1987)

Figure 5. Reports of Problem Drinking in the Past Year, by Marital Status and Sex

or other things that might endanger others"; "I've had serious arguments or fights at home during the past year"; "I've had serious arguments or fights outside the home during the past year"; "When I'm really upset or have serious problems, I get into arguments with others." On this measure of negative health behaviors we find virtually no difference between men and women, but still see much lower levels of unhealthy behaviors among the married—and the widowed—than among the divorced. Umberson (1987) examines a series of negative health behaviors in addition to those shown here, including marijuana use, drinking and driving, substance abuse, and the failure to maintain an orderly lifestyle. She concludes,

On every dependent variable except marijuana use, the divorced and widowed are more likely than the married to engage in negative health behaviors and less likely to experience an orderly life style (1987:313).



SOURCE: Umberson (1987)

Figure 6. Reports of Risk-Taking Behavior in the Past Year, by Marital Status and Sex

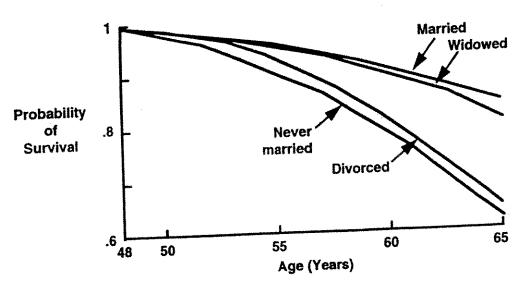
Marital disruption appears to substantially increase stress (Booth and Amato 1991; McLanahan 1983) and decrease subjective well-being (Mastekaasa 1994), and thus may result in negative health behaviors. Umberson (1992) finds that the end of marriage increases men's cigarette and alcohol consumption, lowers body weight for both men and women at the lower end of the weight distribution, and reduces hours of sleep for women. The transition from unmarried to married, however, shows few effects on health behaviors except a decline in women's alcohol consumption. Umberson concludes that some of these changes result from the stress associated with the end of marriage, but that others appear to be more permanent consequences of being unmarried.

How does marriage affect healthy behaviors? Researchers in this area argue that marriage provides individuals—especially men—with someone who monitors their health marriage provides individuals—especially men—with someone who monitors their health and health-related behaviors and who encourages self-regulation (Ross 1995; Umberson 1987, 1992). In addition, social support by a spouse may help individuals deal with stressful situations. Also, marriage may provide individuals with a sense of meaning in their lives and a sense of obligation to others, thus inhibiting risky behaviors and encouraging healthy ones (Gove 1973; Umberson 1987).

MORTALITY

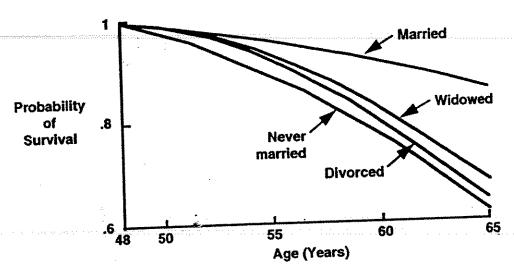
Married men and women exhibit lower levels of negative health behaviors than the unmarried. Perhaps as a result, a good deal of research evidence suggests that married men and women face lower risks of dying at any point than those who have never married or whose previous marriage has ended.

These figures show survival curves for women and for men, estimated from the Panel Study of Income Dynamics. These curves show simulations of results from Lillard and Waite (1995). Figure 7 shows the proportions of females alive at age 48 who survive to age 65, for those married, divorced, widowed, and never married for the entire period. Figure 8 presents comparable proportions for males. These figures show that once we take other



SOURCE: Lillard and Walte (1995)

Figure 7. Probability of Survival to Age 65, by Marital Status, Women



SOURCE: Lillard and Waite (1995)

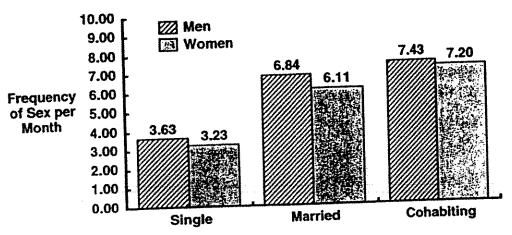
Figure 8. Probability of Survival to Age 65, by Marital Status, Men

factors into account, for both men and women, the married show the highest probability of survival and, of course, the lowest chances of dying. Widowed women are much better off than divorced women or those who have never married, although they are still disadvantaged when compared with married women. But all men who are not currently married face higher risks of dying than married men, regardless of their marital history. Hu and Goldman (1990) report similar differentials in death rates for the unmarried across a number of countries, and Zick and Smith (1991) find that recent marital transitions increase risk of dying only for men.

How does marriage reduce the risk of dying and lengthen life? First, marriage appears to reduce risky and unhealthy behaviors, as I pointed out above. Second, as we will see below, marriage increases material well-being—income, assets, and wealth. These can be used to purchase better medical care, better diet, and safer surroundings, which lengthen life. This material improvement seems to be especially important for women. Third, marriage provides individuals with a network of help and support, with others who rely on them and on whom they can rely; this seems to be especially important for men. Marriage also provides adults with an on-site, readily available sex partner.

Partnered Sex

Figure 9 presents results from the National Health and Social Life Survey(NHSLS), a national probability sample of 3,432 adults, conducted by NORC in 1991. Respondents were asked about their frequency of "partnered sex" in the past year. This question asked "During the last 12 months about how often did you have sex with (PARTNER)? Was it ... once a day or more; 3 to 6 times a week; once or twice a week; 2 to 3 times a month; once a month or less?" This question was asked about all sex partners in the past 12 months, but all analyses presented here refer to the person whom the respondent reports as the primary sex partner. The sample for the analyses of frequency of sexual activity uses all



SOURCE: National Health and Social Life Survey

Figure 9. number of Times Respondent had Sex with Primary Partner in the Past Month, by Marital and Cohabitational Status and Sex

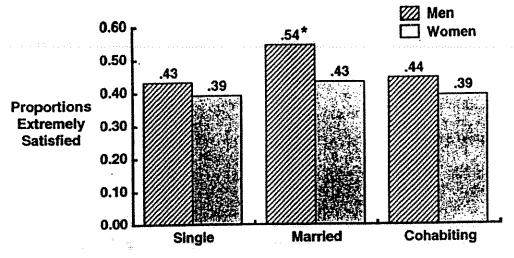
respondents to the NHSLS; analyses are presented in Appendix Tables A1-A5. For ease of presentation, I transformed frequency of sexual activity into number of times in the past

Figure 9 compares the married with those who are living with someone in a sexual relationship and those who are not living with a partner. The low levels of "single" persons' activity reflect the substantial minority of this group who report no sexual activity in the past year, combined with a small minority who report very high levels of sex-and numerous partners. This figure shows that the married respondents report mean levels of sexual activity about twice as high as the single, even after we take into account other characteristics that might affect this behavior. Married men report a mean frequency of sexual activity of 6.84 per month and single men a mean of 3.63 times per month, over the last year. Married women report a mean of 6.11 times per month and single women a mean of 3.23 times per month, over the last year. Cohabiting men and women also report very high rates of sexual activity-7.43 and 7.20 times per month over the past year, which suggests that on this dimension, cohabitation equals marriage in its benefits to the individuals involved. The difference between cohabiting and married men and women is not statistically significant.

These figures reflect reports of sexual activity with the primary partner. Insofar as single and cohabiting men and/or women are more likely than married persons to have multiple partners, the difference between these groups in aggregate level of sexual activity with all partners may be different than reported here. This issue deserves further scrutiny.

So marriage and cohabitation mean more sex, at least with the primary partner, but are single individuals more satisfied with their sex lives? This could be the case, for example, if each act of partnered sex was more passionate or more satisfying, and would be in keeping with the perception that married sex-or even sex with the same partner again and again-becomes boring and unsatisfying. The evidence suggests the opposite, however.

Figure 10 displays reported levels of physical satisfaction with the primary partner for men and for women in ongoing relationships. These analyses use responses to a question that asked "How physically pleasurable did you find your relationship with (PARTNER) to be: extremely pleasurable; very pleasurable; moderately pleasurable; slightly pleasurable; or not at all pleasurable?" The sample includes those in ongoing sexual relationships only; it



*Statistically significant difference.

SOURCE: National Health and Social Life Survey

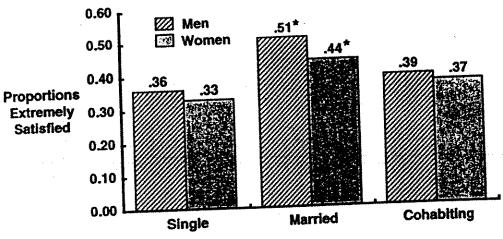
Figure 10. Proportations Extremely Satisfied Physically with Sex with Primary Partner, by Marital and Cohabitational Status and Sex

excludes those whose most recent relationship has ended and those who are not sexually experienced. I define an ongoing sexual relationship as one in which the respondent expects to have sex with this partner again. Asterisks denote statistically significant differences. Levels of physical satisfaction are somewhat higher for men than for women, but married men report significantly higher levels of physical satisfaction with their sex lives than either single or cohabiting men. For women, physical satisfaction does not differ by marital status.

Figure 11 shows reports of *emotional* satisfaction with the primary partner, again for those in ongoing sexual relationships. Here, both married men and married women report more emotional satisfaction with their sex lives than do those who are single or cohabiting, net of duration of the relationship and other characteristics that might affect satisfaction. Although cohabitors report levels of sexual activity as high as the married, both cohabiting men and women report lower levels of satisfaction with this activity. In all comparisons where we see a difference, the married are favored over the unmarried.

How does marriage improve one's sex life? Marriage and cohabitation provide individuals with a readily available sexual partner with whom to have an established, ongoing sexual relationship. This reduces the costs—in some sense—of any particular sexual contact, thus leading to higher levels of sexual activity. Laumann et al. (1994) state that the greater the commitment to a sex partner (defined as a long time horizon for the relationship and for its sexual exclusivity), the greater the incentive to invest in skills that are "partner-specific," including those which enhance the enjoyment of sex with that particular partner. Then sex with the partner who knows what one likes and how to provide it becomes more satisfying than sex with a partner who lacks such skills.

I would argue that more than "skills" are at issue here. The long-term contract implicit in marriage facilitates emotional investment in the relationship, which should affect both frequency of and satisfaction with sex. So the wife or husband who knows what the spouse wants sexually is also highly motivated to provide it, both because sexual satisfaction of one's partner brings similar rewards to oneself and because the emotional commitment to the partner makes satisfying him or her important in itself. Greeley (1994) believes that sex



*Statistically significant difference.

SOURCE: National Health and Social Life Survey

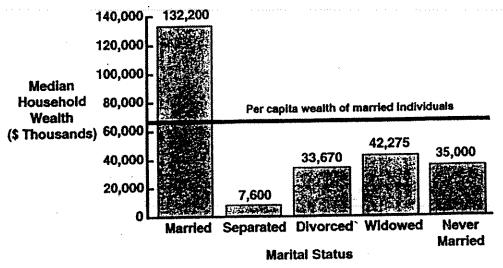
Figure 11. Proportions Extremely Satisfied Emotionally with Sex with Primary Partner, by Marital and Cohabitational Status and Sex

helps keep marriages healthy; it bring couples closer emotionally and helps them weather the inevitable strains of life with another person.

Cohabitation differs from marriage, especially in provision of sexual satisfaction, in important ways. First, although this is not a generally important motivator, some individuals choose to cohabit because it requires less sexual faithfulness than marriage (Bumpass, Sweet, and Cherlin 1991). Laumann et al. (1994) argue that sexual nonmonogamy leads to a less satisfying sexual relationship with any one partner. In addition, partners in cohabitation frequently bring different levels of commitment to the relationship, with different expectations for its future (Bumpass et al. 1991). Both the lower levels of commitment-including emotional commitment-and differences in commitment between partners may affect the sexual satisfaction of those in cohabitations.

Assets and Wealth

In addition to having more sex, the married have more money. Figure 12 shows median household wealth-estimated by Smith (1994) from the Health and Retirement Survey-for married couples, the separated, the divorced, the widowed, and the never married. This measure of wealth includes pension and Social Security wealth as well as real assets, financial assets, and the value of the primary residence. The horizontal line shows per capita wealth for married-couple households (which by definition have two adults) and allows us to compare the per capita wealth level for married-couple households with those of other households. Any level falling below this line marks the disadvantage of unmarried persons relative to married individuals. This figure shows the tremendous disparity between married-couple and single-person households. Smith (1994) finds that the wealth advantage of married couples remains substantial even after taking into account other characteristics that affect savings. Also, although married couples have higher incomes than others, this



SOURCE: Smith (1994)

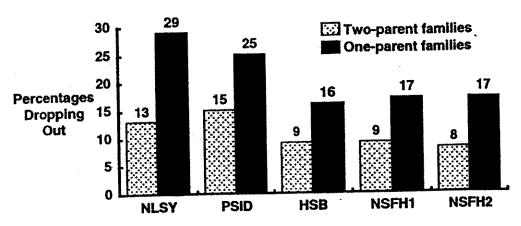
Figure 12. Median Household Wealth, by Marital Status (Ages 51-61)

fact accounts for only 28% of the savings disparity between married-couple households and other households.

How does marriage increase wealth? First, economies of scale mean that two can live as cheaply as one-or maybe one and a half. Married couples can share many household goods and services, such as TV and heat, so the cost to each individual is lower than if each one purchased and used the same items individually. Thus, the married spend less than would the same individuals for the same style of life if they lived separately. Second, because of specialization of spouses in marriage, married people produce more than would the same individuals if single. Each spouse can develop some skills and neglect others, because each can count on the other to take responsibility for some of the household work. The resulting specialization increases efficiency. Below, we see that this specialization leads to higher wages for men. Becker (1981) made these points a number of years ago. Granted, married couples could spend the extra money generated by being married and (say) take expensive vacations or buy more clothes, but the reverse seems to be the case: married couples save more at the same level of income than do the single. The desire to provide for one's spouse and to leave bequests for children may encourage saving by the married, but I think that the requirements and expectations of married (versus single) life encourage people to buy a house, save for children's education, and acquire cars, furniture, and other assets (Rindfuss and VandenHeuvel 1990).

Children's Well-Being

To this point we have focused on the consequences of marriage for adults—the men and women who choose to marry (and stay married) or not. But such choices have consequences for the children borne by these adults. Figure 13 (McLanahan and Sandefur 1994:41) shows one of these consequences—the risk of dropping out of high school for children from one-parent and two-parent families. (One-parent families could result either from disruption of a marriage or from unmarried childbearing.) This figure uses five data sets to present estimates of the impact of childhood family structure on high school

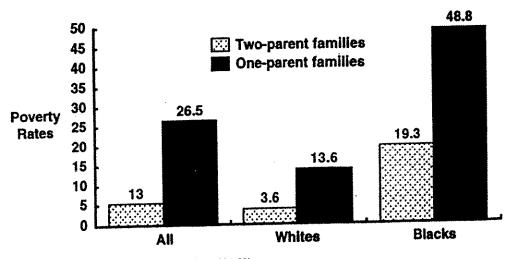


SOURCE: McLanahan and Sandefur (1994:41)

Figure 13. Percentages of Adult Children Who Did Not Complete High School, by Childhood Family Structure

graduation. The results consistently show that about twice as many children from one-parent families as from two-parent families drop out of high school, and these figures take into account differences in a number of characteristics that affect educational attainment. Children raised in one-parent families are also more likely to have a birth themselves while teenagers, and to be "idle"—both out of school and out of the labor force—as young adults (McLanahan and Bumpass 1988; McLanahan and Sandefur 1994). They are also more likely to be poor as children.

Figure 14 shows poverty rates for two-parent families (the gray bars) and for single-parent families (the white bars) (McLanahan and Sandefur 1994:82). Note the very high rates of poverty for single-parent families, especially among blacks. Hernandez (1993) estimates that the rise in mother-only families since 1959 is an important cause of increases in poverty among children. Clearly, poverty, in and of itself, is a bad outcome for children (McLeod and Shanahan 1993). In addition, however, McLanahan and Sandefur estimate that the lower incomes of single-parent families account for about half of the worse



SOURCE: McLanahan and Sandefur (1994:82)

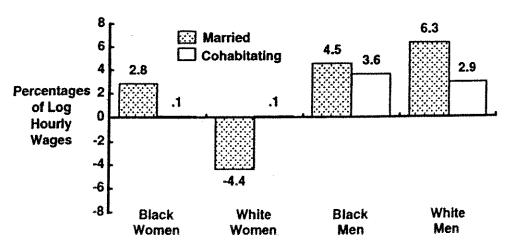
Figure 14. Percentages of Children in Poverty at Age 16, by Race and Family Structure

outcomes of children in these families. The other half comes from children's access—or lack of access—to the time and attention of two adults in two-parent families. The presence of two parents potentially means more parental supervision, more parental time helping with homework, another parental shoulder to cry on after a hard day. Children in one-parent families spend less time with their fathers (this is not surprising because they don't live with them), but they also spend less time with their mothers than children in two-parent families. Also, the high levels of residential mobility among one-parent families and among stepfamilies disadvantages children in these families (Astone and McLanahan 1994). Finally, children who spend part of their childhood in a single-parent family, either because they were born to an unmarried mother or because their parents divorced, report significantly lower-quality relationships with their parents as adults and have less frequent contact with them (Lye et al. 1995).

Labor Force and Career

As the last consequence of marriage for individuals, I present evidence on labor market outcomes. Figure 15, taken from work by Daniel (1994, forthcoming), shows the impact of marriage and cohabitation on the log hourly wages of young men and women, estimated from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth. These estimates show the difference in wages between married, cohabiting, and single individuals, net of other characteristics that might affect wages, and take into account selection into marriage. Daniel labels the remaining difference a "wage premium" for marriage. Figure 15 shows that both black and white men receive a wage premium if they are married: 4.5% for black men and 6.3% for white men. Black women receive a marriage premium of almost 3%. White women, however, pay a marriage penalty, in hourly wages, of over 4%. Men appear to receive some of the benefit of marriage if they cohabit, although Figure 15 shows that cohabitation more nearly resembles marriage—at least in this regard—for black than for white men. According to Daniel's estimates, women receive no wage benefits and pay no wage penalty for cohabiting in comparison to remaining single.

For women, Daniel (1994) finds that marriage and presence of children together seem



SOURCE: Daniel (1995)

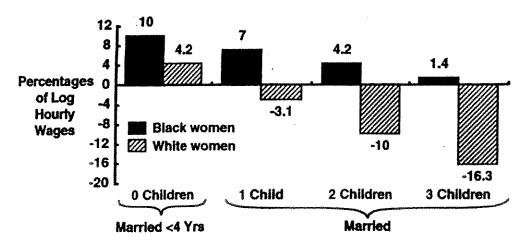
Figure 15. Increase (Decrease) in Log Hourty Wages with Marriage and Cohabitation, by Race and Sex

to affect wages; the effects depend on the woman's race. Figure 16 shows the combined effect of marriage and children on young women's wages. Black and white single women with children, by Daniel's estimates, pay no marriage penalty. Black married women (shown by the white bars) receive a sizable bonus if married and childless; this bonus diminishes with the number of children. Among white women (the gray bars), only the childless receive a marriage premium. Having any children makes the effect of marriage on white women's wages negative, with very large negative effects for those with two children or more. Daniel finds that the negative effect of children on married women's wages disappears for white women when he takes hours of work into account, but children continue to reduce wages for black married women.

Why should marriage increase men's wages? Daniel (1994, forthcoming) argues that marriage makes men more productive at work, thus leading to higher wages. Wives may assist husbands directly with their work, offer advice or support, or take over household tasks, freeing husbands' time and energy for work. Also, as I mentioned earlier, being married reduces negative health behaviors such as drinking and substance abuse, which may affect productivity. Finally, marriage increases men's incentives to perform well at work, so as to meet obligations to family members.

Why do black men benefit less from marriage than white men? Because the male-female wage gap is smaller for blacks than for whites, black women tend to receive smaller returns from investing in their spouses' earning power. In addition, the lower marriage rates and the higher divorce and separation rates for blacks than for whites reduce the payoff of investments in marriage in general.

To this point, all the consequences of marriage for the individuals involved have been unambiguously positive—better health, longer life, more sex and more satisfaction with it, more wealth, and higher earnings. But the effects of marriage and children on white women's wages are mixed at best. Marriage and cohabitation clearly increase women's time spent in housework (South and Spitze 1994); married motherhood reduces their time in the labor force and lowers their wages. Although the family as a unit might be better off with this allocation of women's time, women generally share their husbands' market earnings only when they are married. Financial well-being declines dramatically for women and their children after divorce or widowhood; women whose marriages have ended are often quite disadvantaged financially by their investment in their husbands and children rather than in



SOURCE: Daniel (1995)

Figure 16. Increase (Decrease) in Women's Log Hourly Wages with Marriage and Children, by Race

their own earning power. Recent changes in divorce law seem to have exacerbated this situation, even while increases in women's education and work experience have moderated it (Bianchi 1994).

DISCUSSION

Does Marriage Cause These Outcomes?

The obvious question, when one looks at all these "benefits" of marriage, is whether marriage is responsible for these differences. If all, or almost all, of the benefits of marriage arise because those who enjoy better health, live longer, or earn higher wages anyway are more likely to marry, then the effects of marriage simply may be due to selectivity (see, for example, Goldman 1994 on this issue in regard to health). In such a case, we as a society and we as individuals could remain neutral about each person's decision to marry or not, to divorce or remain married. Although we do not have evidence on the impact of selectivity for all of the outcomes I have presented here, we have some. I will review that evidence briefly here.

Many scholars have argued that selection of the healthiest individuals into marriage may account for the lower mortality rates of the married (see Goldman 1993 for a summary of these arguments). Mastekaasa (1992), for example, finds that single young adults who are initially in the best psychological health are more likely to have married two to four

years later.

In recent work, Lillard and Panis (1995) estimate the effect of marital status on men's mortality, taking into account potential selectivity both into and out of marriage. They argue that men in poor health may seek marriage, with its attendant mortality benefits, which leads to selection of the least healthy into marriage. They find evidence of this adverse selection of men into marriage on the basis of health; men in good health tend to marry later or to postpone remarriage. Yet men who tend to be in good health, for unobserved reasons such as lifestyle or preferences, are selected positively into marriage. These two effects differ over age groups and balance each other out differently at older and younger ages. Thus Lillard and Panis find that positive selection on the basis of unobservables dominates for never-married men and leads to an overstatement of the protective effects of marriage; adverse selection on the basis of health dominates for older divorced men, camouflaging the health advantage of the married for this group. The authors find that never-married and widowed men experience higher mortality than married men for reasons other than health, but that divorced men's mortality disadvantage is explained by their poorer health.

Daniel's (1994, forthcoming) findings on men's and women's wages use individual fixed effects to take into account selection into marriage. When he does not account for selectivity, he finds a 12 to 15% marriage premium for men. Thus selectivity accounts for about half of men's marriage premium; Daniel concludes that the other half is causal.

McLanahan and Sandefur (1994) estimate a bivariate probit model, which allows for correlation between the error terms in a model of family disruption and children's outcomes, and still find significant effects of family structure on most outcomes. In a recent article in Journal of Marriage and the Family, Ross states:

The positive effect of marriage on well-being is strong and consistent, and the selection of the psychologically healthy into marriage or the psychologically unhealthy out of marriage cannot explain the effect (1995:129).

I think that perhaps we have been too quick to assign all the responsibility to selectivity

here, and not quick enough to consider the possibility that marriage causes some of the better outcomes we see for the married.

The Institution of Marriage

What is it about marriage that causes some portion of the outcomes I outlined above? I think that four factors are the key. First, the institution of marriage assumes a long-term contract, which allows the partners to make choices that carry immediate costs but eventually bring benefits. The long time horizon implied by marriage makes it sensible—rational choice is at work here—for individuals to develop some skills and to neglect others because they count on their spouse to fill in where they are weak. Thus married couples benefit from specialization and an exchange of what Grossbard-Shechtman (1993) calls "spousal labor." The institution of marriage helps individuals honor this long-term contract by providing social support for the couple as a couple and by imposing social and economic costs on those who dissolve their union.

Second, marriage assumes sharing of economic and social resources and what we can think of as co-insurance. Spouses act as a sort of small insurance pool against life's uncertainties, reducing their need to protect themselves by themselves from unexpected events.

Third, married couples benefit—as do cohabiting couples—from economies of scale. Fourth, marriage connects people to other individuals, to other social groups (such as their in-laws), and to other social institutions which are themselves a source of benefits (Stolzenberg, Blair-Loy, and Waite 1995). It provides individuals with a sense of obligation to others, which gives life meaning beyond oneself. It may change the psychological dynamics of the relationship in ways that bring benefits. Some consensus exists that marriage improves women's material well-being and men's emotional well-being, in comparison with being single.

The (Incompletely Institutionalized) Institution of Cohabitation

Cohabitation has some but not all of the characteristics of marriage, and so carries some but not all of the benefits. Cohabitation does not generally imply a lifetime commitment to stay together; as I pointed out earlier, a substantial minority of cohabiting couples disagree on the future of their relationship (Bumpass et al. 1991). Cohabitants seem to bring different, more individualistic values to the union than do those who marry (Clarkberg, Stolzenberg, and Waite forthcoming). Goldscheider and Kaufman (1994:3) believe that the shift to cohabitation from marriage signals "declining commitment within unions, of men and women to each other and to their relationship as an enduring unit, in exchange for more freedom, primarily for men." Perhaps as a result, some scholars view cohabitation as an especially poor bargain for women; Jones concludes:

The increasing trend toward consensual partnering in the West, seen by many as an emancipation from rigid concepts of marriage, may represent a new enslavement rather than freedom for women (1994:900).

Cohabitants are much less likely than married couples to pool financial resources, more likely to assume that each partner is responsible for supporting himself or herself financially, more likely to spend free time separately, and less likely to agree on the future of the relationship (Blumstein and Schwartz 1983). This uncertainty makes both investment in the relationship and specialization with this partner much riskier than in marriage, and so reduces them. Whereas marriage connects individuals to other important social institutions,

such as organized religion, cohabitation seems to distance them from these institutions (Stolzenberg et al. 1995; Thornton, Axinn, and Hill 1992).

Warnings

Some warnings are in order. First, for most outcomes, I have presented information only on the average benefits of marriage. Also, discussing a typical cohabiting couple may be even less useful than discussing an "average" marriage. Clearly, some marriages produce substantially higher (and others substantially lower) benefits for those involved. Some marriages produce no benefits and even cause harm to the men, women, and children involved; that fact needs to be recognized.

On average, however, marriage seems to produce substantial benefits for men and women in the form of better health, longer life, more and better sex, greater earnings (at

least for men), greater wealth, and better outcomes for children.

Why Has Marriage Declined?

If marriage produces all these benefits for individuals, why has it declined? Although this issue remains a subject of much research and speculation, a number of factors have been mentioned as contributing. First, because of increases in women's employment, there is less specialization by spouses now than in the past; thus the benefits to marriage are reduced (McLanahan and Casper 1995). Clearly, employed wives have less time and energy to focus on their husbands, and are less financially and emotionally dependent on marriage, than wives who work only in the home. In addition, high divorce rates decrease people's certainty about the long-run stability of their marriage, and thus may reduce their willingness to invest in it (Lillard and Waite 1993). Also, changes in divorce laws have shifted much of the financial burden for the breakup of the marriage to women, making investment in marriage a riskier proposition for them (Regan 1993). Men, in turn, may find marriage and parenthood less attractive when divorce is common, because they face the loss of contact with their children if their marriage dissolves. Further, women's increased earnings and young men's declining financial well-being have made women less dependent on men's financial support and have made young men less able to provide it (Oppenheimer 1994). Finally, public policies that support single mothers and changing attitudes toward sex outside marriage, toward unmarried childbearing, and toward divorce have all been implicated in the decline in marriage (McLanahan and Casper 1995). This brief list does not exhaust the possibilities, but merely mentions some of them.

What Should We Do?

Most of the research results that I have reported here are fairly well known, especially to researchers working on the topics I have discussed. But I think they are not well known outside the research community, and I think we have not put the pieces together into a larger picture. I think that persuasive, even compelling, evidence exists for the picture I have tried to sketch here—a picture of the benefits, to individuals, of the social institution of marriage. Now that we have painted this picture, what should we do with it?

In my view, social scientists have a responsibility to weigh the evidence on the consequences of social behaviors in the same way as medical researchers evaluate the evidence on the consequences of (say) cigarette smoking or exercise. As evidence

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accumulates and is communicated to individuals, some people will change their behavior as a result. Some will make different choices than they would otherwise have made because of their understanding of the costs and benefits, to them, of the choices involved. To continue with the example of medical issues such as smoking or exercise, we have seen behaviors change substantially because research findings on these behaviors have been communicated to the public. In addition, we have seen changes in attitudes toward behaviors shown to have negative consequences, especially when those consequences affect others, as in the case of smoking. These attitude changes then raise the social cost of the newly stigmatized behaviors. HMOs and religious organizations develop programs to help people achieve the desired behavior; support groups spring up.

In addition, we as a society can pull some policy levers to encourage or discourage behaviors. Public policies that include asset tests (Medicaid is a good example) act to exclude the married, as do AFDC programs in most states. The "marriage penalty" in the tax code is another example. Also, in the state of Illinois, young women under age 18 who have already become mothers must have their parents' permission to marry. Sometimes this leads to a situation in which young couples are able to have children but cannot marry even if they want to do so. These and other public policies can reinforce or undermine the institution of marriage.

I think social scientists have an obligation to point out the benefits of marriage beyond the mostly emotional ones, which tend to push people toward marriage but may not sustain them when the honeymoon is over. We have an equally strong obligation to make policy makers aware of the stakes when they pull the policy levers that discourage marriage.

Appendix Table A1. Variable Definitions, Means, and Standard Deviations: NHSLS Cross-Section

		Men (N = 1,330)		Women (N = 1,664	
Variable		Mean SD		Mean	SD
Dependent Variable					
SEXFREQI	Frequency of partnered sex last year	70.52	70.58	64.49	68.76
SEXFREQ4	Frequency of partnered sex last year	77.37	72.22	71.01	70.62
SEXFREQ5	Frequency of partnered sex last year	5.56	5.12	5.09	5.02
Independent Variable	•				
AGE1824	l equals age 18-24, 0 else	.16	.37	.16	.37
AGE2529	l equals age 25-29	.16	.36	.13	.34
AGE3034	l equals age 30-34	.16	.37	.17	.38
AGE3539	l equals age 35-39	.14	.35	.15	.36
AGE4044	equals age 40-44	.13	.34	.13	.34
AGE4549	i equals age 45-49	.09	.29	.10	.30
AGES054	l equals age 50-54	.08	.27	.08	.27
AGESSS9	l equals age 55-59	.07	.25	.08	.26
MARRIED	I equals currently married	.52	.50	.54	.50
SINGLE	l equals currently single	.40	.49	.37	.48
COHAB	l equals currently cohabiting	.07	.26	.08	.20
EDLTHS	l equals less than high school degree	.14	.34	.14	.35
EDHS	equals high school degree	.28	.45	.29	.45
EDLTB	l equals some college or vocational	.32	.47	.34	.47
EDB	l cours college degree	.17	.37	.16	.36
EDAD	l equals advanced degree	.09	.28	.06	.24
NONE	equals no religion	.14	.34	.09	.28
FUNDAM	i equals type 2 Protestant	.29	.45	.34	.47
CATHOLIC	l equals Catholic	.27	.44	.27	.44
OTHREL	equals other religion	.28	.45	.28	.45
WHITE	equals white non-Hispanic	.82	.39	.79	.41
BLACK	l equals black non-Hispanic	.11	.32	.14	.35
HISPANIC	l equals Hispanic	.07	.26	.08	.26

Respondents with responses of don't know, refusal, or missing are not included in these analyses.

Appendix Table A2. Variable Definitions, Means, and Standard Deviations: NHSLS Cross-Section

	Cross-Section	01-1220			
		Mcn (N = 994)		Women (N = 1,234)	
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Variable					
Dependent Variable	a standal memori perinci	4.37	.73	4.25	.78
PHYS	Physical satisfaction with current partner Emotional satisfaction with current partner	4.30	.78	4.17	.87
EMOT	Emotional satisfaction with current p				
Independent Variable		10.54	10.13	11.52	10.20
DURAT	Duration of sexual partnership	.13	.34	.15	.36
AGE1824	1 equals age 18-24, 0 else	.15	.36	.15	.36
AGE2529	i equals age 25-29	.16	.37	.17	.38
AGE3034	l equals age 30-34	.15	.36	.16	.37
AGE3539	l equals age 35-39	.14	.35	.13	.34
AGE4044	l equals age 40-44	.10	.30	.10	.30
AGE4549	l equals age 45-49	.09	.29	.08	.27
AGE5054	i equals age 50-54	.07	.26	.06	.24
AGESSS9	l equals age 55-59	.69	.46	.71	.45
MARRIED	l equals married partnership	.22	.41	.18	.38
PARTNER	l equals primary partnership	.10	.30	.10	.31
COHAB	l equals cohabiting partnership	.12	.32	.14	.34
EDLTHS	l equals less than high school degree	.28	.45	.30	.46
EDHS	l equals high school degree	.32	.47	.33	.47
EDLTB	l equals some college or vocational	.18	.38	.16	.37
EDB	l equals college degree	.09	.29	.06	.24
EDAD	l equals advanced degree	.13	.33	.09	.28
NONE	1 equals no religion	.28	.45	.34	.47
FUNDAM	l equals type 2 Protestant	.27	.45	.27	.45
CATHOLIC	t equals Catholic	.29	.45	.28	.45
OTHREL	l equals other religion	.83	.37	.80	.40
WHITE	l equals white non-Hispanic	.10	.30	.12	.3:
BLACK	l equals black non-Hispanic	.07	.25	.08	.27
HISPANIC	1 equals Hispanic			faction with	marrio

For currently married/cohabiting respondents, analyses refer to satisfaction with married/cohabiting partners.

For single respondents, analyses refer to satisfaction with primary partners if respondent expects to continue having sex with them. Respondents with responses of don't know, refusal, or missing are not included in these analyses.

Appendix Table A3. OLS Coefficients for the Effects of Independent Variables on Frequency of Partnered Sex, Genders Combined . .

	(N = 2,994)			
Variable	Coefficient	Standard Error		
Independent Variable	;	4 4070		
AGE2529	-0.2200	4.4870		
AGE3034	13.8960	4.3802**		
AGE3539	- 20.0094	4.5356***		
AGE4044	-30.1978	4.6706***		
AGE4549	- 30.8042	5.1149***		
AGE5054	-41,8229	5.4369***		
AGE5559	-60.5501	5.6396***		
MARRIED	41.9657	2.7000***		
COHAB	55.0831	4.9262***		
EDLTHS	-5.9338	4.0165		
	-2.3703	3.1050		
EDLTB	-3.3717	3.8436		
EDB	-8.8040	5.1611#		
EDAD	1.4090	4,3266		
NONE	4.1178	3.2390		
FUNDAM	-0.3090	3.3339		
CATHOLIC	2.0481	3,9076		
BLACK	— · ·	4.8752*		
HISPANIC	12.2416	2.4621**		
GENDER	-7.2039			
Intercent	71.5890	4.4757***		
Intercept R ²	.138			

The dependent variable (SEXFREQ4) is the frequency of partnered sex; here I use the more generous estimates of frequency. p < .10; p < .05; p < .01; p < .01; p < .001

Appendix Table A4. Log Odds for the Effects of Independent Variables on Physical Satisfaction with Primary Partner (Extremely)

	Men (N = 994)		Women (N=1,234)		
Variable	Coefficient	Standard Error	Coefficient	Standard Error	
Independent Variable				0000444	
DURAT	0241	.0106*	0320	.0092***	
AGE2529	.1622	.2519	2586	.2198	
AGE3034	3160	.2522	0690	.2166	
AGE3539	0847	.2599	1314	.2239	
AGE4044	.1083	.2720	.3232	.2419	
	3533	.3128	1095	.2741	
AGE4549	.0446	.3331	0497	.3068	
AGE5054	.7087	.3861#	2455	.3486	
AGE5559	.4509	.1977*	.1991	.1849	
MARRIED	.0672	.2509	0046	.2286	
COHAB		.2252	2026	.1967	
EDLTHS	0174	.1664	.0447	.1482	
EDLTB	0622	.1984	- .1494	.1855	
EDB	1585	.2469	.2458	.2653	
EDAD	0981	· · · · ·	1871	.2322	
NONE	1547	.2155	.2023	.1571	
FUNDAM	.0658	.1726		.1604	
CATHOLIC	1905	.1731	0956		
BLACK	2385	.2231	.1294	.1943	
HISPANIC	.2930	.2721	.0158	.2286	
Intercept	.0744	.2420	0556	.2310	
Chi-Square (df)	26.216(19)		40.006(19)		

[#] p < .10; * p < .05; ** p < .01; *** p < .001.

Appendix Table A5. Log Odds for the Effects of Independent Variables on Emotional Satisfaction with Primary Partner (Extremely)

	Men (N = 994)		Women (N = 1,234)		
Variable	Coefficient	Standard Error	Coefficient	Standard Erro	
Independent Variable			0220	.0092*	
DURAT	0113	.0105	0229	.2209	
AGE2529	0464	.2529	1793	.2185	
AGE3034	- .6755	.2563**	2096		
AGE3539	4903	.2627#	2494	.2261 .2430	
AGE4044	 .5740	.2757*	.1275		
AGE4549	6376	.3148*	0461	.2740	
AGE5054	1585	.3337	1643	.3079	
AGE5559	.1188	.3797	6560	.3584#	
MARRIED	.5899	.2009**	.4885	.1878**	
COHAB	.1338	.2551	.1876	.2318	
EDLTHS	0521	.2262	4102	.2005	
	0408	.1671	.0248	.1480	
EDLTB	1414	.2000	0360	.1840	
EDB	0369	.2477	.3376	.2653	
EDAD	1728	.2183	4269	.2366#	
NONE	.2027	.1730	.0005	.1572	
FUNDAM	0196	.1739	0903	.1596	
CATHOLIC		.2265	.3244	.1952#	
BLACK	2645	.2720	.1309	.2283	
HISPANIC	0565			.2324	
Intercept	0527	.2433***	2675	.2324	
Chi-Square (df)	31.781(19)		37.592(19)		

p < .10; * p < .05; ** p < .01; *** p < .001.

NOTES

¹ These simulations use as a baseline males or females who are white high school graduates born in 1920, with mean levels of income, city size, and region, living either alone (if not currently married) or with spouse only (if currently married).

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